

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Alcester

St Faith's Road, Alcester, B49 6AG

Inspection dates 1–2 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The Reception class is well managed and children make good, often outstanding progress from very low starting points.
- Attainment has risen in all subjects in Key Stages 1 and 2 due to the rapid progress of all groups of pupils.
- Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They show interest and concern for one another, where they live and the wider world.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas to be developed further. This has enabled them to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Senior leaders provide high-quality training and support for staff, through the work of the federation.
- Leaders track pupils' achievement closely and ensure that if pupils require additional support, in order to improve their learning, this is quickly provided.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school and praise the staff's commitment to their children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teachers mark pupils' work regularly, sometimes they do not point out how and where pupils can improve.
- Lower-attaining pupils do not make progress as rapidly as others, particularly in writing. This is because teachers do not adapt activities quickly enough when pupils find the work too easy or too difficult.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons jointly with the executive headteacher or head of school. In addition, the inspector listened to pupils read and observed a number of groups receiving additional support from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Meetings were held with pupils, two members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a range of staff, including senior leaders.
- The inspector took account of the 21 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and letters received during the inspection. The inspector also met with parents and carers informally.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' progress, safeguarding documents and records relating to attendance, behaviour and bullying.

Inspection team

Elaine Long, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Our Lady's Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- About three quarters of the pupils are White British, and a quarter come from other minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority, for whom the school receives additional funding from the government (the pupil premium), is average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils join the school partway through their primary education.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards; these set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since 2011, the school has been part of a federation: an executive headteacher oversees the quality of education in three schools and a head of school takes responsibility for the day-to-day running of this school.
- The executive headteacher is a National Leader in Education and works with a number of other schools. One of the subject leaders also works with other schools in aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching in order to raise pupils' attainment further by:
 - ensuring that marking always gives clear suggestions for how pupils might improve their work
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to respond to and act upon teachers' marking
 - ensuring that teachers provide appropriate work, particularly in writing, for the lower attaining pupils within each class and that tasks are not too easy or too hard

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start in Reception with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. They make good and often outstanding progress because they are taught well and are given learning experiences which excite and enthuse them. Reception staff keep a careful check of what children can and cannot do, and ensure that they provide work which challenges them and moves them on to the next level quickly. Children reach a good level of development by the end of Reception and join Year 1 as confident learners.
- Reading is taught very well. The teaching of phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make) in Reception and Key Stage 1 is extremely thorough and helps pupils develop a good ability to read new words. In the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2013, all pupils reached the nationally expected level.
- Standards in the Year 2 National Curriculum tests in 2013 were above average in mathematics and average in reading and writing: the highest the school has achieved. The headteacher has set very challenging targets for all pupils. Accelerated progress across Key Stage 1, from low starting points, means that current Year 2 pupils are on track to achieve even higher standards this year.
- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013, attainment was above average in writing and mathematics and average in reading. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in mathematics and writing exceeds national standards and in reading was very close to national standards.
- Current school data shows that standards are above average in all subjects across Key Stage 2, and progress is improving strongly and being sustained. The very effective training for staff in writing is having a positive impact on the number of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment in this subject.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are identified early and support is quickly provided to help them make good progress in their learning. The effectiveness of their support is regularly reviewed. Currently, most of these pupils are making good or better progress.
- In 2013, the number of pupils in Year 6 eligible for the pupil premium was too small to comment on their attainment without risk of identifying individuals. Pupil premium funding is used to provide specific focused one-to-one or small-group support in literacy and mathematics, additional training staff, along with additional resources to support pupils' learning and make it more relevant and exciting.
- The executive headteacher has implemented a rigorous system to check pupils' progress and current data show that in all year groups, and across subjects, pupils supported through the pupil premium are making good and sometimes outstanding progress. In Key Stage 1, the attainment gaps between eligible pupils and others has been closed. There is a similar picture across Key Stage 2. In Year 6, eligible pupils are now less than half a term behind in all subjects.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make progress which is either at similar rates to other pupils or exceeds them.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in Reception and Year 1 is good. Staff work well together to provide children with an exciting range of opportunities through which they learn very effectively. High expectations and close tracking of children's progress, with a strong focus on speaking and listening, results in rapid progress. In their latest 'superheroes project' children concentrated well, tried hard and used tablet computers to take their photograph and add masks, hats and expressions to their own faces. They enjoy what they are doing and show increasing confidence as they learn.
- The teaching of early reading is well organised and methodical. The sounds that letters make (phonics) are taught in ways which interest and motivate the pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress and attainment in reading has risen.
- Teaching is good with all adults having high expectations of pupils. Well-trained teaching assistants support pupils extremely well and are very skilful at asking searching questions to develop pupils' understanding, so that they can go on to work unaided.
- Classrooms are well resourced and spaces are used creatively to support pupils' learning. Pupils know where to find prompts, reminders and resources to support them as they are working. This helps them to develop pride in their work and encourages them to show their initiative.
- In lessons, speaking and listening lie at the heart of all learning. Pupils discuss ideas with one another in pairs and do this very well. Pupils listen to one another, cooperate well and know how important it is to be sensitive to one another. They speak confidently in small groups and also when speaking to the whole class. They are encouraged to choose words carefully and to adopt the right tone depending on audience. They know that their opinions and comments are valued. They enjoy it when they are given a number of tasks to choose from and like being able to make decisions about how they carry these tasks out.
- Each piece of work in pupils' books is preceded by a clear explanation of what pupils are expected to know, understand and be able to do. Pupils like this information. They are proud of their work, and the presentation of their books is excellent.
- The school's marking policy is thorough and ensures work is regularly marked. However, some teachers do not let pupils know specifically what they have done well or how they can improve their work further.
- Pupils describe their lessons as 'fun'. They find learning enjoyable because they are excited by what they are doing. In a Year 5/6 lesson on *Romeo and Juliet*, pupils were working in news production teams to deliver an update on the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt. Their ability to work effectively within these teams, combined with a detailed understanding of what was expected of them, led to some impressive outcomes. The teacher's and teaching assistant's very effective use of questioning and support ensured that all pupils made outstanding progress.
- Sometimes the level of difficulty of the work teachers set is not matched to pupils' capabilities. In writing, lower attaining pupils make slower progress as the work is often either too easy or too difficult.
- Teachers' planning and review of lessons, where pupils are given opportunities to apply the skills of numeracy, reading, writing and problem-solving which they have learned, is not done consistently. This results in slower progress for pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They support one another well when working in groups, taking it in turns to make contributions. When working without direct help from adults, pupils do not give up when the work becomes more difficult; they try harder, wanting to do the best they can. Pupils appreciate the help they are given. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. There is a friendly, purposeful atmosphere as the day begins. Pupils arrive promptly and show by their enthusiasm that they are keen to learn.
- In and around the school, in assemblies, and at break and lunchtime, behaviour is always good. Pupils treat each other with respect. They are polite, friendly and courteous. They feel their school has a strong family feel to it and they are proud to belong to it. They are keen to take on additional responsibilities; for example, as house captains, assembly monitors, mentors to younger pupils or belonging to the school council.
- The school's effective approach to responding to pupils' emotional needs and development is responsible for the positive behaviour. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They enjoy belonging to a school where everyone gets along with one another, understanding and respecting one another's differences.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Through lessons and assemblies, pupils are given the skills they need to manage everyday risks for themselves. For example, they know how to use the internet safely and they are aware of the dangers associated with the road, fire, talking to strangers and the possible threat of dangerous dogs.
- Pupils know who to go to in the school if they feel worried or upset. All parents and carers, who responded to Parent View, or the school's own questionnaire, agree that their children feel safe and happy at the school.
- In lessons and assemblies, the school teaches pupils about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. Pupils know what to do if they are bullied because they are given clear guidance. They report that bullying is rare and would be dealt with well, if any were to occur. They feel the school is a friendly and supportive place where they feel safe, and parents strongly support this view too.
- Parents, carers enjoy being invited into school. They talk about their children being happy, becoming more confident and well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong leadership and effective teamwork are resulting in pupils making more rapid progress and their attainment rising. There is a common sense of purpose amongst the staff and morale is high.
- Leader's regular lesson observations, followed by detailed feedback, have ensured that teaching is now typically good, with an increasing amount that is outstanding. The management of teachers' performance is detailed and rigorous, and teachers are held to account fully for pupils' progress and achievement. There are clear links between pay increases and pupils' performance.
- Leaders track and review the performance of pupils with individual teachers regularly and ensure

that additional support is provided quickly for pupils who might need extra help in learning. Senior leaders have ensured that areas which need improvement are quickly addressed. Recent training in writing is having an impact, as evidenced by rising attainment in this area.

- An exciting programme of lessons, combined with activities and visits, provides pupils with opportunities to explore and learn about their world. Pupils say that trips to the Space Centre and Warwick Castle give them experiences they might not otherwise have had. They use computers very confidently to extend their learning and understanding. The school encourages them to investigate and find answers for themselves. Pupils enjoy these challenges and are becoming well equipped to take a full and active role in the diverse community in which they live.
- High-quality displays throughout the school encourage pupils to enquire about the world they live in and their role in it. Displays of pupils' work show them that it is valued, and this encourages them to strive for excellence. Classrooms are bright and well organised, and there are many helpful prompts to aid pupils' learning.
- The school works closely with its local church and has a wealth of partnerships within its community and beyond. Staff work very closely across the federation to share best practice and expertise, and this is having a very positive impact on whole school improvement.
- The school's use of the primary sports funding is already showing a positive impact. There has been a sustained improvement in the teaching of physical education as staff skills have been improved. Investment in resources and offering a greater variety of sporting activities has resulted in greater numbers of pupils participating in these activities. More pupils now are involved in competitive sport events with other schools.
- The local authority's involvement in the school has been one of guidance and support where needed. Since it has become part of a federation, the staff have been involved in training and opportunities to share good practice across the three schools, leading to the improvements in teaching from the last inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school's strengths very well, and what still needs to be done. They are in school regularly, meet with staff and check the school's work very thoroughly. The information the governors receive from the executive headteacher is extremely detailed, allowing them to ask probing questions and to challenge, when appropriate. They work closely with leaders and have a good knowledge of how the school performs in comparison with other schools. They have a strong understanding of what the data on pupils' progress are showing them. They check that the headteacher is setting appropriate performance management targets for teachers, rewarding good teachers and challenging underperformance. They also offer invaluable support. They make sure that the funds available through the pupil premium are used well to improve achievement; analysing assessment data for different groups of pupils half-termly in subjects and year groups. The governing body makes sure that all statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding children.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	125704
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	431160

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Jones
Headteacher	Jacqui Le Maitre (Executive Headteacher) Teresa Unitt (Head of School)
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2012
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