

St Benet's Catholic Primary School

Ringsfield Road, , Beccles, NR34 9PQ

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- A few more-able pupils are not always achieving as well as they should. They sometimes find their work too easy because teachers do not always plan activities or set homework to challenge their thinking.
- A significant number of pupils are not making enough progress in mathematics.
- Pupils do not always know how well they are doing against their targets or how to improve their learning when their work is marked.
- Pupils are not always informed how well they are using literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects or how to improve them.
- Teachers do not always have an accurate knowledge of pupils' prior learning or attainment levels.
- Self-evaluation is not accurate.
- Subject leaders are not monitoring the impact of teaching on the learning of different pupils across their subjects robustly enough.
- Governors do not have a realistic view of the impact of teaching over time on pupils' learning and are not always rigorous in holding the school to account for its work.

The school has the following strengths

- Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has led to good teaching which ensures that children are making good progress.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching and pupils' achievement have improved since the last inspection. Most pupils are now making good progress in writing, and progress in reading is consistently good.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those with disabilities and special educational needs make good progress because they receive good support for their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. The school ensures that they feel safe. Most pupils attend regularly and arrive punctually to lessons.
- The deputy headteacher provides good support for the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed four teachers in the eight lessons seen. Five of these observations were carried out with senior leaders.
- The inspector heard pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work with the deputy headteacher. The inspector also looked at samples of children's work in the Reception Year.
- A meeting was held with a group of pupils and informal discussions were held with different pupils at lunchtime and break time. Joint meetings with the lead inspector for St Edmund's were also held with the leaders of the federation, the governing body, the diocesan representative together with the local authority represented. Meetings were also held with the subject leaders, the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator, and the diocesan representative. Meetings were held with the acting executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the consultant headteacher appointed by the diocese.
- The inspector took account of 28 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, a few written submissions from parents, a telephone conversation with parents and held informal discussions with 12 parents who brought their children to school. The inspector also examined 8 questionnaire responses from staff.
- The inspector observed the school's work and the work of the federation, looking at a range of documentation including the schools' summary self-evaluation, minutes of the governing body meetings, safeguarding policies, records of attendance and pupils' behaviour, and information about the progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils throughout the school over time.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Benet's Catholic Primary is smaller than most primary schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion of such pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school continues to be federated with St Edmund's Catholic Primary School, which is sited seven miles away, as The Federation of Catholic Schools of the Waveney Valley. A single governing body and an executive headteacher run both schools. The executive headteacher has been absent since October 2013 and, until very recently, the deputy headteacher with support from a consultant headteacher from the diocese and the local authority has been responsible for leading the federation. A new acting executive headteacher was very recently appointed to cover the absence of the executive headteacher and had only just started working in the school, at which point the deputy headteacher reverted to the role of deputy headteacher of St Benet's. During the autumn term 2013, there was a significant turnover of staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is always good or better and enables pupils' to make consistently good progress over time by making sure that:
 - more-able pupils are given tasks in lessons and are set homework which always challenges their thinking
 - pupils always know how well they are progressing towards their targets and how to improve their learning, particularly in mathematics, when their work is marked
 - pupils are always clear about how well they are applying their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
 - teachers always have an accurate knowledge of pupils' prior learning and attainment levels and use this information consistently to set challenging targets and activities to extend pupils' thinking.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
 - self-evaluation is consistently accurate and used to robustly inform school improvement planning
 - subject leaders regularly and rigorously monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' learning within their subjects
 - governors develop a realistic view of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time and use this information to always challenge the work of the school.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The school's data on the progress of current pupils over time and evidence from their books show that achievement requires improvement. Not all pupils are making enough progress in mathematics. Pupils' work shows that a few more-able pupils have not been working to their potential towards the higher levels in national tests. In discussion, a few of these pupils said that their work in lessons and the homework set for them was sometimes too easy.
- The schools' data show that, during the autumn term, pupils were making insufficient progress in mathematics in some year groups, partly because of changes of teacher.
- Partnership working across the federation requires improvement because teachers and subject leaders are not always rigorous enough in checking the accuracy of levels of progress pupils are making to ensure these are agreed across the two schools.
- Children arrive in the Reception class with knowledge and skills which are below those typical for their ages. By the end of Reception, they have made good progress in all areas of learning as a result of good teaching and good leadership. Their attainment when they go into Year 1 is in line with the expectations for their ages.
- Results of national assessments in 2013, improved significantly from 2012, with more-able pupils in Years 2 and 6 performing at least as well as similar pupils in the national assessments and tests in reading, writing spelling and mathematics. They also performed above the national average in English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium make good progress because teaching assistants provide good support for their learning in literacy and numeracy. In 2013, there were very few pupils in Year 6 who were eligible for pupil premium. It is therefore inappropriate to report on their progress because there is a risk of identifying individuals. The gaps between the attainment of these pupils and that of their classmates are steadily closing.
- Pupils with disabilities and special educational needs make the same progress as their classmates because they receive good support for their learning.
- Pupils make good progress in physical education as a result of good use of primary sports funding to provide additional activities such as fencing, gymnastics and tag rugby. They stay fit and healthy.
- Results in 2013 showed that the proportion of pupils gaining the expected level in the Year1 national phonics check was above average. Pupils make good progress in reading across the school because they have regular opportunities to read in class and are encouraged to read at home every day.
- Attainment in Year 2 was above average in reading and mathematics and broadly average in writing in 2013. Overall results improved significantly from the previous year.
- Attainment in Year 6 improved significantly in 2013 from 2012. It was above average in reading, in English grammar, spelling and punctuation and in mathematics in 2013 and broadly average in writing.

- Pupils are making better progress, particularly since January 2014, as a result of increasingly good teaching.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Pupils' work and the school's data show that teaching during the current academic year requires improvement. This is mainly due to the turnover of teachers during the autumn term which led to inconsistencies and slowed pupils' learning and progress. A significant number of parents expressed concern about this in their questionnaire returns and in discussion during the inspection, although they said that the situation was much better now.
- Pupils' written work is not always marked consistently to inform them of how well they are doing against their targets, or how to improve their learning. Too often, work is marked only with ticks and/or positive comments. In discussion during lessons, older pupils said that they would like more feedback on how well they are achieving and more guidance on how to reach the next level.
- Pupils' books show that teachers do not always have an accurate knowledge of pupils' prior learning or attainment levels and, when they do, are not consistently using this information to set challenging targets and activities to extend pupils' thinking.
- An examination of samples of pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics showed that they are not always informed how well they are using literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects or how to improve them.
- A few more-able pupils said that sometimes the work they were given in lessons and their homework was too easy.
- Good teaching with well-planned, stimulating and practical activities in the Reception class ensures children are well-motivated and remain focused on their learning and acquire new knowledge and understanding quickly. This was seen in children's work and in the well thought-out activities, such as counting quickly in 10s and in matching the number of bees to a particular flower to develop the meaning of 'one more'.
- Teaching assistants support the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs well. They break tasks down into smaller steps, provide examples to illustrate meaning and clarify any misunderstandings.
- Pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium also receive good additional help for their learning in literacy and numeracy.
- The very few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English receive good support for learning and, with help from staff and other pupils, use translator software on laptop computers to help them to communicate.
- The executive headteacher, with good support from the deputy headteacher, has effectively ensured that the quality of teaching in the school has improved since the last inspection, with a higher proportion of good or better teaching. Following the impact on learning due mainly to the turnover of teachers in January 2014, the deputy headteacher ensured that good teaching was shared across both schools in the federation. This is reflected in the higher proportions of recent good teaching seen in both schools.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is true in lessons and around the school. Staff have good relationships with pupils, they encourage good behaviour and manage behaviour well. As a result, pupils respond well and show respect for others.
- Pupils say that there are only a few incidents of bullying, which are always dealt with effectively by staff. A significant number of parents who returned their questionnaires did not agree that bullying was dealt with effectively, although nearly all agreed that their children were safe in school. In discussion during the inspection, no parents expressed any concern about how bullying was dealt with and confirmed that behaviour was typically good. Pupils have good awareness of different types of bullying and how to prevent it.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning, remain focused and try hard to succeed in lessons and this enables them to make good progress.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils move in an orderly manner from one area of the school to another. They stay safe in the dining hall and handle learning resources and equipment safely in lessons. In team games, they play safely and abide by the rules of the game. They have a good awareness of internet safety. Parents, pupils and staff agree that pupils are safe in school.
- Most pupils attend regularly and arrive punctually to lessons.
- Shared practice between the federated schools has developed a consistent approach to improving pupils' behaviour and safety and in supporting families in both schools.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- A significant number of parents have little confidence in the work of the federation and believe communication is not as good as it should be. While praising the leadership in this school, particularly of the deputy headteacher, in ensuring good teaching and learning, parents expressed concerns about the overall leadership of the federation.
- Self-evaluation is not entirely accurate because it does not take sufficient account of the impact of the turnover of teachers on pupils' current learning and their progress over time. This limits the robustness of school development planning.
- Subject leaders are not monitoring the impact of teaching on the learning of different pupils across their subjects robustly enough.
- The deputy headteacher provides good support for the school. She has ensured that assessment systems are improving. These are becoming more consistent and more accurate in the school.
- There is a strong emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills which are reflected in the improved results in national tests in 2013. There is a wide range of lunchtime clubs, after school clubs, and visits, including a residential trip to enrich learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted through strong links with the parish churches across the federation. Pupils learn about other world religions, such as Buddhism and Judaism, they have strong links with a school in Africa and are showing responsibility for caring for the environment.

- The school makes good use of its additional funding for pupil premium in providing additional support from well-trained teaching assistants in literacy and numeracy which enables pupils to catch up in learning. The school also makes good use of its primary sports funding. It pays for coaches to work closely with teachers in delivering good quality lessons in physical education, thereby enhancing the skills of teachers. It also provides opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of different sporting events. This is improving interest and participation, as well as pupils' attainment in physical education.
- The local authority and diocese are providing appropriate support for the federated schools since the absence of the executive headteacher to ensure both schools continue to improve. The schools are sharing and developing expertise, for example in tracking pupils' progress and staff are working together to improve their skills in assessing pupils' work and levels of attainment.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors do not have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning over time. They are not provided with sufficient guidance on how to form their own view of the quality of teaching. Minutes of governors' meetings confirm the findings of the recent local authority review of the school. This found that they are not holding the school to account for its work rigorously enough, for example in relation to the impact of spending on pupil premium and primary sports funding. Governors have carried out an audit of their skills and have produced an action plan to strengthen governance. Governors ensure that legal requirements, particularly for safeguarding procedures, are met. They have developed consistent up-to-date policies and overseen training for staff in the federation to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils is promoted across both schools. They have a developing awareness of data and speak highly of the deputy headteacher in recently providing accurate information about the progress of different groups of pupils in both schools.

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	124778
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	430801

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	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Valori
Headteacher	Maria Uragallo (Executive headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2012
Telephone number	01502 712012
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