

St Teresa Roman Catholic Primary School

Brook Road, Borehamwood, Herts. WD6 5HL

Inspection dates 13–14 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement is improving but not yet good. Progress varies between year groups, and is faster in reading than in writing and mathematics.
- Disruption to teaching in the past has meant that some pupils have not made enough progress by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Although teaching has improved this year, it is not yet good enough in all classes to promote good overall achievement.
- More-able pupils are not always helped to make the progress they could.
- Teachers do not make the most of situations when they ask pupils questions in lessons to develop their learning and help them make good progress.
- Staff in the Nursery and Reception classes are not using the outdoor area in particular to enrich and extend children's learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Inadequate teaching has been eradicated, and much is now good or even better.
- Some pupils are now making good progress. The current Year 6 pupils have made exceptional progress in reading, writing and mathematics this year.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly strong.
- The changes made by the new headteacher and senior leaders have led to better teaching and progress this year.
- The governors have changed the way they work so that they understand how well the school is doing and how it needs to improve further. They make regular checks on how quickly improvements are being made.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons, five of which were seen together with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff, two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Deputy Chair and two other governors.
- Informal discussions were also held with parents.
- The inspectors took account of the 80 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire Parent View, individual communications from parents, the school’s own parental and pupil questionnaires and 30 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and reviewed a range of documentation, including the school’s checks on its performance, its analysis and tracking of pupils’ progress, records of behaviour and safety, school improvement plans, records relating to classroom observations and the management of staff performance, safeguarding arrangements and records of meetings of the governing body.
- The inspectors also looked at pupils’ work, listened to pupils read and checked information on attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bimla Thakur

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those with a parent in the armed services or in local authority care, is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average; the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportions supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs are below average.
- There have been numerous changes of staff, including leaders, since the previous inspection. Standards dropped significantly soon after that inspection.
- The current headteacher joined the school on an interim basis in September 2012 and was appointed as the permanent headteacher in September 2013. The current leadership team has been in its present form since then.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement, especially in writing and mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, have work in lessons that is at the right level of difficulty to help them make good progress
 - teachers' questions help pupils think deeply about their learning and help them make better progress
 - children in the Nursery and Reception classes develop their skills effectively in the outside area.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The 2013 Year 6 results showed that pupils had not made enough progress during their time in the school, especially in mathematics. This was because their learning had been disrupted by staff and leadership changes. However, faster progress in their final year helped them make up some ground. Pupils currently in Year 6 have made outstanding progress this year, especially in writing and mathematics. This has made up for slower progress in the past, but pupils are capable of higher standards.
- Children generally start school with skills typical for their age, though this can vary from year to year. Progress is more accelerated in the Reception class than the Nursery and children start Key Stage 1 with skills expected for their age. In 2013 standards on entry to Year 1 were higher, but these children had started school with stronger skills than usual.
- Pupils' overall progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 is better in reading than in writing and mathematics, but overall it still requires improvement. The results of the most recent Year 1 screening check on how well pupils know phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words) were below average, but this reflected a lower starting point for those pupils. During the inspection, pupils were observed using their phonic skills well to help them with their reading and writing. Pupils currently in Year 1 are reading at a standard above that typically seen for their age.
- In some classes in Key Stage 2, progress is accelerating as a result of good teaching. Again overall standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average, but often highest in reading.
- Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding generally make similar progress to other pupils. The attainment of eligible Year 6 pupils in 2013 fell from the previous year and they were over three terms behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils known to be eligible currently in the school are making better progress. This means that the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils is closing. Most of the funding is spent on additional adults to provide one-to-one or small group support as needed.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported. Their needs are quickly identified and the level of their support is checked regularly to make sure it is helping them achieve well. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make progress similar to or better than other pupils.
- More-able pupils do not always achieve as well as they could in some classes. However, as teaching is improving they are making better progress and far more pupils in Year 6 are working at a high level than in previous years.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Until this year the quality of teaching has been adversely affected by considerable turbulence in staffing at all levels. The situation has now stabilised and the new leadership team has worked effectively to improve teaching this year, but it is not yet having a consistently good impact on pupils' learning.
- In some classes, more-able pupils are not always given work that helps them achieve well. On occasions they do similar work to other pupils and are not moved on to activities which will help

them extend their learning when they are ready. This holds back their progress.

- Some teachers are very skilful at asking pupils questions which make them think deeply about their learning. Pupils are expected to explain and clarify their answers, which checks their understanding and helps develop an appreciation of how they can improve. However, in some classes teachers do not correct misconceptions or help deeper understanding because they too readily accept simple answers, or do not ask pupils sufficiently probing questions.
- The Nursery and Reception classes provide enjoyable activities for children. However, when teachers describe the activities available to children, especially those outdoors, they do not give them ideas of how they might learn and develop new skills, or show high expectations for their achievement.
- Teachers create very positive relationships in lessons. This means that pupils are not afraid to make mistakes and want to try hard. For example, Year 3 pupils excitedly investigated how quickly they could solve multi-step mathematical problems using both trial and error methods and more formal systems. In Year 5 pupils quickly identified possible pitfalls in an investigation of light and keenly discussed their findings with each other and the teacher.
- Strong teaching in Year 6 has been supported by additional help for pupils both individually and in small groups. Gaps in learning were identified and support provided to fill these gaps enabling pupils' achievement to improve rapidly. Booster clubs where pupils developed and practised their skills also contributed to the excellent progress made this year.
- Marking in books is thorough. In most classes pupils are given clear guidance as to how they can improve and teachers make sure they act on the advice. Pupils are given opportunities to practise their literacy skills in different subjects and teachers make sure that the guidance they give is consistent, whatever subject the pupils are studying.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well. Most pupils are helped within the classroom by well-briefed additional adults. The support is reviewed regularly and adapted as necessary to make sure it remains effective as pupils' needs change.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents and pupils say that it has improved this year. This is because the behaviour policy is consistently applied and pupils strive to earn rewards such as golden leaves and crosses. At the request of the school council, the headteacher holds weekly afternoon teas for the recipients of these awards – a treat rated highly by the pupils.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take, including emotional and cyber bullying. They told inspectors that it rarely happens, but any incidents are dealt with well by adults. Pupils value the worry box and know that any concerns they have will be taken seriously.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders ensure that access to the building is secure and staff are rigorously checked prior to appointment. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have learnt how to keep safe on the roads, in case of fire and when using the internet.
- Older pupils have a mature approach to taking responsibility. During the inspection, Play Buddies proudly explained their roles. Pupils enjoy buddy afternoons when older and younger pupils work

or read together. Year 6 'Citizens' help teachers to prepare classrooms and equipment every morning before school.

- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance. They are enthusiastic about lessons and say the teachers always help them with their work. Even when, lessons are occasionally not so interesting and pupils lose focus, they do not disturb others.
- Pupils who find behaving difficult are well supported. Consistent approaches and sensitive handling by adults make sure that their behaviour improves rapidly and other pupils' learning is not disrupted.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led well by the headteacher. Since joining she has improved achievement, raised the quality of teaching and improved behaviour. Through developing the leadership skills of the other senior leaders, she has built a strong team. They regularly check how well pupils are doing, hold teachers accountable for pupils' progress and make sure that any pupils who have fallen behind are quickly helped to catch up.
- An appraisal system for checking teachers' performance was introduced last year. Leaders have used the system rigorously to ensure the quality of teaching continues to improve at a brisk pace. The headteacher and the governing body use individual staff targets effectively to measure whether pay rises and promotion are justified by results.
- The subjects pupils learn are lively and interesting and help develop their literacy and communication skills. The new primary sports funding is used to widen sports opportunities for pupils, improving their physical well-being and teaching new sporting skills. It has enabled the school to join a local sports partnership which provides a specialist teacher who works alongside teachers in lessons, helping them learn new techniques that they can use in their own teaching. The partnership also gives opportunities for pupils to compete against other school and take part in joint sporting activities, where pupils have been very successful, winning trophies and awards.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is evident in all the school does. In lessons pupils are encouraged to show consideration for others, and wall displays encourage them to reflect on their attitudes and actions and develop mature self-awareness. Strong links with the church support good spiritual development. Pupils from different backgrounds and cultures get on well together and every culture is celebrated. For example, during the school's 'International Day' pupils and adults were encouraged to wear traditional dress and some of the Polish pupils performed a traditional dance. The school promotes equality of opportunity to make sure that no groups of pupils achieve less well than others.
- Good partnership work with local schools supports staff training, and teachers share good ideas and practice. The local authority has provided good support for the school, including helping to develop leadership skills and improving teaching throughout the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have improved the way they work and make sure that the school is tackling past underachievement effectively. Governors meet regularly with senior and subject leaders to check that pupils' achievement is rising. They ask challenging questions to hold senior leaders accountable for improvement and visit the school regularly to check the quality of teaching and learning for themselves.
 - Governors understand how the appraisal system is contributing to improving the quality of

teaching and make sure that teachers' pay levels reflect the progress their pupils make. Governors manage the school's finances effectively and know that the pupil premium is helping eligible pupils to achieve better than in the past. They understand how the new primary school sports funding is used to extend physical education opportunities through providing high quality teaching and giving pupils the chance to work with, and compete successfully against, pupils in other schools.

- Governors make sure that national requirements for safeguarding and child protection are met. They produce a termly newsletter to communicate with parents and have established a 'Communication Forum' for parents to share their views. In response to a few parental concerns over behaviour and bullying, they ran an anti-bullying workshop which was well attended.

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	117466
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	443815

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Doneo
Headteacher	Teresa McBride
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2010
Telephone number	020 89533753
Fax number	020 83815273
Email address	admin@stteresas.herts.sch.uk

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