

# Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School

Little Wheatley Chase, , Rayleigh, SS6 9EH

**Inspection dates** 21–22 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- Over time, pupils' achievement across all year groups has not been good enough, and especially in the case of middle- and upper-ability pupils in mathematics and reading.
- The quality of teaching varies too much and this prevents pupils from making consistently good progress.
- Teaching is not challenging enough and in some lessons, pupils of different abilities receive similar work. It is too easy for the most able and does not help enough pupils to use their knowledge and develop their skills as well as they can.
- In some lessons, teachers do not check sufficiently on how much pupils are learning when they are working in small groups or by themselves. This slows pupil progress because they are not pushed on to more difficult work quickly enough.
- The quality of marking is not consistent and does not help pupils to understand how to improve their work.
- Leaders and teachers do not use assessment information effectively to promote the progress of specific groups, such as pupils of middle ability.
- The new subject leadership team has not yet secured enough improvements to teaching and achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, governors and new senior staff have raised teachers' expectations of pupils, and particularly of their progress.
- The funding to increase pupils' participation in sport is used very effectively to raise standards and promote pupils' well-being.
- The appointment of able and committed new staff has meant that teaching is improving rapidly. There is no inadequate teaching.
- Pupils are safe in school. Their behaviour is good and the quality of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength of this school.
- Leaders have an accurate view of teaching and tackle any under-performance quickly.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons across the school, of which seven were seen jointly with the headteacher or senior leaders. Inspectors also toured the site and made observations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes during and in between lessons.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information about pupil progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance. They also studied improvement plans, assessment records, checks on the quality of teaching and documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils.
- Discussions were held about the school's self-evaluation with the headteacher.
- Further meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, members of the Governing Body, and a senior adviser from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils from across the school on the first and second day of the inspection, in order to discuss their progress and assess how well school prepares them for life.
- Inspectors met with 20 parents across both days and took account of 125 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's similar survey of parental opinion. They also received one email contact from a parent.
- The inspection team also studied the 49 responses of different teachers and staff who completed a questionnaire.

## Inspection team

David Turner, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graham Marshall

Additional Inspector

Vreta Bagilhole

Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- This is a much-larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority and for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs supported at school action is lower than the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. A number of teachers including senior staff have left the school and a new leadership team has been created.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is good across the school and supports good pupil achievement by ensuring that:
  - all pupils, and especially those of middle and higher ability, receive work which is more challenging as they get older so that pupils extend their understanding and knowledge of the different subjects they are taught.
  - all teachers use their marking to give pupils detailed comments and guidance in their books so that they can improve their work
  - teachers check more systematically on pupils' learning during lessons by questioning them closely and moving them on to harder work as soon as they are ready.
- Raise achievement by :
  - improving reading by teaching all pupils, but especially older pupils, about how writers use different techniques, such as structure and imaginative language, so they can use them to improve their own reading and written work.
  - making sure pupils are able to apply their mathematical knowledge to real-life problems more frequently, so they deepen their understanding of the concepts and techniques they are taught.
- Improve leadership by ensuring that:
  - leaders identify and share more widely the best practice in teaching and marking already evident in the school
  - leaders who are responsible for different subjects carefully check the impact of teaching, including marking, on pupils' learning and quickly advise teachers on what must be improved.
  - leaders use assessment information more effectively to set challenging targets for all pupils, which take account of their starting points and refer to national standards in order to check on how well specific groups are performing .

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- In recent years, not enough pupils have made good progress from the point at which they start at this school. Pupils do not achieve well enough in mathematics and reading or consistently reach the higher levels they are capable of. In 2013, standards dipped in the Year 6 tests in mathematics and reading. Pupils under-achieved in mathematics, while making expected progress in writing.
- The achievement of pupils currently attending the school is much improved and all are currently making expected progress across different year groups and subjects. However, the progress of pupils is not yet good, especially in the case of pupils of middle ability and some of the most able, in mathematics and reading. Pupils' work, information from lessons and school assessment information show that Year 6 pupils are likely to have made only expected progress in the recent tests by the time they leave.
- When they enter Reception Year, pupils' understanding and skills are broadly in line with the levels typically seen at their age. With the exception of mathematics, they generally make steady progress across most areas of learning. By the time they enter Year 1, children achieve standards that are also broadly in line with national expectations but they do not make enough gains in their basic skills, especially mathematics.
- Standards in Key Stage 1 have been rising in mathematics and reading since the last inspection though only slowly. In writing, standards have improved more quickly and represent good progress.
- Progress across Key Stage 2 has been slow because the level of challenge for different pupils has not been high enough over time, especially in mathematics and reading. The large group of pupils who started Key Stage 2 with expected levels, as well as those who achieved higher standards, have not made more than expected progress.
- Pupils spend too much time learning basic mathematics skills and operations rather than using them practically in order to build a deep understanding of the subject and how it is applied in real life. As a result, this leaves gaps in pupils' confidence and knowledge that hinders their attempts to work out mathematics problems. An example of this was seen in a Year 5 lesson, where children quickly and accurately calculated the differences between harvests but did not know what the figures might teach them about what was happening at the farm.
- The development of pupils' understanding in early reading and phonics (the sounds made by letters and words) is improving in current year groups, including those containing older pupils who did not do as well in their Year 1 tests.
- Pupils develop regular reading habits which are improving their command of spelling. They are encouraged to read every day but progress in reading, especially among older pupils, is not yet good because when asked, they are less confident in identifying the purpose and techniques of writers or the development of stories through language and structure.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is improving. Standards and progress were at least as expected for this age-group and better than in reading and mathematics in 2013. This is because pupils have a wider range of opportunities to apply their knowledge of writing in ways that help them develop a greater command of key skills. Religious education and other topic work are used very effectively to support pupils' development as writers.

- In recent years, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have generally made similar progress from their starting points to other pupils in the school, particularly in mathematics. However, the progress of this group of pupils currently at the school is improving rapidly. Inspectors observed examples of good progress resulting from the skilled support given by teaching assistants and effective use of assessment information to set these pupils more demanding targets.
- The achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is similar to that of other pupils because those of middle and higher ability have not made good progress across Key Stage 2. In the 2013 Year 6 tests, the gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and their classmates was approximately 10 months in reading and writing and 12 months in mathematics. However, these gaps are steadily reducing for eligible pupils currently at the school because of the good planning now being undertaken to meet the needs of each individual pupil.
- Pupils' participation in sport and physical activity is good and the wide range and quality of the opportunities offered to them are strengths of the school. Leaders make effective use of additional government funding to extend the range of sports activities and pupils have been closely involved in the choice of design of new facilities.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **requires improvement**

- Teaching is improving and there is no inadequate teaching in the school. However, the last year has seen a number of teachers leaving or arriving at different points in the school year. The staffing situation is now stable but a number of classes have experienced a change in teacher and this has led to variation in the quality of teaching over time that continues to restrict pupils' progress overall.
- The use of assessment information to plan lessons and provide appropriate work is not effective enough to support good learning. Work set in writing and mathematics lessons is often similar for pupils of different ability. In a number of Key Stage 1 classes, there is no planning of higher level work for the most-able pupils once they have shown they have successfully tackled the main work set. In some Key Stage 2 lessons, pupils of different abilities are all given the same work and, while it is more demanding in the later stages, pupils all work through the same exercise or task until that point. This has meant some of it is too easy. The most-able pupils have not been able to gain the knowledge and skills they need to make good progress.
- Improvements in teaching are leading to more pupils making good progress in mathematics but, even so, the majority of pupils are capable of handling more challenging work. The teaching of mathematical knowledge and arithmetic skills is effective but teaching does not enable pupils to apply their skills by handling problems and thereby deepening their understanding of key mathematical concepts and operations. Across a range of Key Stage 2 classes, middle and higher ability pupils were often able to calculate accurately but the work set did not help them see how to use their skills in real life.
- Teachers use questioning to check on how much pupils have gained from their work but it is not yet used well enough when pupils are working in small groups or by themselves to challenge what they say or guide them to think more deeply about what they have learned. An example of this was seen in two Year 6 literacy lessons where pupils identified how they could annotate their design work using a range of writing techniques; many pupils were unsure of the purpose behind several of the important techniques they were employing.

- The marking of work and teachers' comments are not always precise or informative enough to lead to the full development of pupils' skills and knowledge. Across different subjects and age groups, while some pupils receive good advice on how to improve, others do not. Consequently, they do not know what sort of improvement is needed and how to avoid mistakes in future.
- The use of teaching assistants is good. Teaching assistants are skilful and their work is well-planned by senior leaders and teachers. They work closely with different pupils and are observed to provide patient, encouraging and supportive teaching in all lessons.
- Where teaching is good, it has been well-organised to ensure that the progress of pupils of different abilities is supported carefully so they can close gaps on knowledge and skills. This has helped many recover lost ground dating back to earlier periods in their time in school when they made less progress. One example was a Year 5 class where the teacher focused the teaching for different pupil groups on known gaps in their mathematics knowledge and helped them clear up their misunderstandings very quickly. This good practice is not, however, consistently evident across the school.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in lessons and around school. They are very polite, mature and helpful to each other and adults. Several classes have experienced a change in their teacher in the last year but, despite this disruption, pupils continue to show good attitudes towards learning, work hard and maintain genuine interest and commitment to their learning.
- Pupils arrive promptly and properly equipped for school and enjoy taking responsibility for managing their own work. They show curiosity about what they are doing, think for themselves and cooperate well. In one example, Year 6 pupils quickly assembled into groups in order to investigate some difficult design work. They worked very carefully, discussed how they could overcome problems and listened to each other very patiently.
- Pupils take up leadership roles with enthusiasm. They have been responsible for a number of improvements to the school site and have helped choose the design for new sports facilities and decide the use of funds for a wide range of good causes they have chosen to help. They take a close interest in the people they have supported through international charities and visit those nearer home.
- Staff, leaders and governors who gave their views say that behaviour is good. While a small number of parents expressed concern about behaviour in surveys, inspectors found no evidence of poor behaviour or weak management of pupils by teachers.
- All staff expect and encourage good behaviour and caring relationships. The quality of relationships is an important reason for the good attitudes seen in lessons and across the school. Pupils know and follow the effective behaviour policy and understand the rewards and sanctions of the school. They particularly like the recognition they receive for good behaviour and effort, which are valued and encouraged by teachers. Older pupils say they feel as though they are part of a very caring 'school family'.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good and they feel safe and happy in school. Pupils understand different types of bullying, including cyber, physical and verbal bullying. They say that they get on well and bullying is rare. They are confident that if reported, bullying is

normally sorted out quickly by staff. Serious incidents are very rare, as shown by school records. Parents agree this is a safe and happy school.

- Pupils wear their uniforms with pride and their attendance is high. There have been no known exclusions in recent years. As one parent said, 'My children love this school and I know I am speaking for many families when I say how happy and safe they are here.'
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength of the school. Pupils are very thoughtful about their beliefs and values. They are very well supported to develop musical or artistic interests. They have a very clear sense of right and wrong and show respect to one another. Many express a sincere commitment to help people who are less fortunate than themselves in their own country and overseas. They have a good understanding of different faiths and cultures and a pride in their own.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- The headteacher is determined to bring about substantial improvements in the school and is well supported in this by effective and caring governors. However, until recently, the school has not ensured pupil achievement has been good enough. Although the leadership has successfully challenged teachers' previously low expectations, the actions taken so far have not been enough to ensure achievement in English and mathematics is consistently good in all classes.
- The headteacher has developed a new leadership team who are all experienced teachers. They have a good understanding of what must be done to improve teaching in the different subjects and across the school. However, subject leaders have not yet had enough time to see the full impact of their initial work or secured sufficient improvements in teaching and achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- Pupil assessment information is not yet used as effectively as it should be. For example, it has not been used consistently to set challenging targets or to track pupils' progress from their different starting points. Leaders recognise these weaknesses and have already put in place measures to improve their own and teachers' use of assessment data.
- The changes the headteacher has introduced have included a large-scale change in the staffing of the school and the re-organisation of leadership with a new team of senior and subject leaders. During this period there has been some turbulence in teaching which has affected pupils' progress in some cases but this period has now come to an end. The school's more settled staffing has allowed teaching to improve steadily and this is having a beneficial impact on achievement.
- Leaders' evaluations of the school's performance are perceptive and accurate. They judge the qualities of teaching well and link what they observe in classrooms to wider pupil achievement. Systems to support teaching are effective because they have been linked closely to rigorous performance management and evidence of teachers' impact on pupil achievement.
- School improvement planning is well-matched to the needs of the school and focuses on a small number of important areas for teaching, pupil progress and leadership. The work is manageable and progress is carefully monitored by senior staff and governors.
- The wider curriculum of the school plays a major role in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children, which is a significant strength of this school. The school provides



many opportunities to help children reflect on their values and those of others. Pupils are extremely thoughtful about the lives and experiences of other people and demonstrate this through many good works. Their cultural awareness is also well-developed through the international outlook of their school and their links with causes that support others in foreign countries including Catholic Action For Overseas Development.

- The large majority of parents and every member of staff are supportive of the school's leaders who regularly consult them on the direction they are taking the school in. Parents who spoke with inspectors were very positive and one said, 'I have had three children who have attended this school and they are very happy here.'
- Systems to ensure pupils are safe are effective and meet all statutory requirements.
- Leaders' use of pupil premium funding is improving. Every child has a personalised, costed support plan and every action on the plan is closely tracked against personal and academic progress.
- The primary sports funding (additional funding provided by the government) has been used effectively to provide new equipment and facilities. Provision for sport is consequently well-planned and is adding value to the already strong sporting culture at the school. Pupils have been closely involved in planning for the use of this new funding.
- In recent years, the local authority has not provided the level of support and challenge to the school that data on pupils' achievement clearly indicates were needed. In its recent assessments of the school's performance, it has identified areas of effectiveness and weaknesses but final agreements about further support have still not been scheduled to happen until Summer 2014.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is a well-established and effective group of committed people who care deeply about the school family and its pupils. They are closely involved guardians of this school and have given the headteacher every support as he has driven through much-needed change. Their support is not uncritical and they hold leaders to account through clear performance targets and the searching questions they ask at meetings. Individual governors visit the school regularly and are attached to core functions of the school, including teaching, achievement and finance. Governors have received suitable training in all key areas including pupil performance data and finance. As a result of their diligent approach, they have a sharp appreciation of the quality of teaching, pupil achievement, staff performance and the impact of the pupil premium.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115163
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	443983

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	416
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ashley Carter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Parascandolo
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01268 785741
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