

Pope Paul Catholic Primary School

Baker Street, Potters Bar, EN6 2ES

Inspection dates 11–12 June 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leaders and governors have not done enough to improve the school and ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to promote good achievement. The work set in lessons is not always sufficiently challenging to ensure that pupils of differing ability make good progress.
- Teachers do not always make clear to pupils how to improve their work. Explanations, feedback and marking are not always detailed or clear enough to help them move forward.
- Pupils do not get enough chance to practise their numeracy skills in different subjects.
- Teachers do not always have a clear idea of the pupils' attainment and progress. Their judgements are sometimes too generous and are not consistently measured or recorded.
- Senior leaders are not rigorous enough in monitoring how well pupils are doing or checking how teachers apply the school policies for marking and assessment.
- Some parents feel that the school does not communicate effectively with them.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils who have special educational needs are supported well and make good progress.
- Pupils make a good start in learning about letters and sounds. The school successfully encourages them to enjoy reading.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Senior leaders and the governing body work well together to ensure the school's procedures keep pupils safe. Pupils say they feel safe at school.
- The school is working closely with the local authority to improve the quality of teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons across all year groups, including two seen jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspection team held meetings with school leaders, a governor, a representative from the local authority and some pupils. They attended an assembly and heard some pupils read. They also visited the school's breakfast club.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books. They examined a range of documents including the school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress and information relating to how the school keeps children safe.
- The views of 51 parents and carers were analysed through the Parent View website, and inspectors spoke informally to parents and carers to seek their views about the school.
- The views of 18 staff who returned questionnaires were also considered.

Inspection team

Gillian Scobie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Tabberer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is well below the national average. This is additional government funding for particular groups of pupils. In this school it applies to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. Most pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is below the national average, but the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs or are supported by school action plus is broadly average.
- There have been a significant number of staff changes recently.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress, especially in Key Stage 1, by:
 - sharing the effective practice that exists within the school to ensure that pupils are stimulated in lessons and understand clearly what they are aiming to achieve
 - ensuring that the marking policy is applied consistently, so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve their work
 - ensuring that there is an appropriate level of challenge for pupils according to their ability
 - improving the use of numeracy across the curriculum.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - school policies are implemented consistently
 - thorough checks are made on teachers' performance and their assessments of pupils' work, so that pupils' attainment and progress are measured accurately and reliably.
- Improve relationships with parents and carers by developing a dialogue that is based on mutual trust and understanding.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils are not reaching the standards they are capable of by the end of Year 6. Children join the Reception class with knowledge and skills above the level typically found at their age. They make good progress, and by the end of Reception they have a firm foundation for the next steps in their learning in literacy, numeracy and social skills. However, progress is inconsistent in the older age groups and requires improvement.
- Progress across Key Stage 1 slows down and varies between subject areas. In Year 1, progress in writing is stronger than in mathematics or reading. However, by the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading and writing is above the national average, while attainment in mathematics is broadly average.
- In Key Stage 2, progress is again inconsistent across the subject areas. The majority of pupils make better progress in reading and writing than in mathematics. However, pupils' attainment overall is broadly average and below what might reasonably be expected, given their attainment at the beginning of Year 3. National data show that achievement in Key Stage 2 was lower in 2013 than in 2012, and the school has not responded quickly enough.
- The most able pupils do not make consistently good progress because they are not always suitably challenged with more difficult work. There is no significant difference in the progress made by pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds
- Pupils are encouraged to read widely and they enjoy their reading. The 'Get caught reading' display celebrates pupils' reading in a variety of settings and pupils are eager to point to their picture. A good range of books are available in classroom libraries as well as in the hall at lunchtimes, as the school does not have a separate library. As a result of the school's work the majority of pupils make good progress in reading.
- Pupils who have special educational needs receive well-planned support and make good progress overall. Their progress is better in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- The small number of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding makes comparisons difficult year on year, and there were too few in Year 6 in 2013 to comment on their attainment without identifying individuals. However, their progress varies in line with that of other pupils and the funding has not been used effectively to help them achieve well.
- In the 2013 Year 1 phonics screening check, which measures the pupils' understanding of letters and sounds, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard was well above the national average. Most of those who retook the test in Year 2 were successful. School records show that pupils are on track to achieve similar results in the 2014 check.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good over time and, as a result, pupils do not always make good progress.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons, but do not always explain the tasks carefully and in enough detail to enable the pupils to make good progress. Consequently, pupils do not always achieve

as well as they could.

- Pupils are taught in mixed-ability classes and there is often a wide range of ability for which teachers do not always plan appropriately challenging work. As a result pupils are not always able to move forward quickly and consistently make good progress.
- The school has developed a school marking policy and all the pupils understand how it works. However, it is not always used consistently to help pupils make good progress. Often, what pupils have done well is clearly outlined but what they must do next in order to make further progress is not sufficiently detailed to help them move forward.
- Teachers develop pupils' literacy skills well in a wide range of subjects, but the use of numeracy to support learning in other subjects is more limited.
- Pupils enjoy sharing their learning. Discussion in pairs or small groups enables them to share and develop new ideas, and teachers often include opportunities for this in their lessons. Pupils are always keen to present their work to each other and answer questions enthusiastically and, as a result, they consolidate their learning.
- Teachers often plan opportunities to help pupils to reflect on what they are learning and express new ideas fluently and write with confidence, and often give the pupils well-chosen examples to explain difficult concepts and use probing questions effectively to move learning forward. At the end of a mathematics lesson in Year 4, pupils were able to explain quite complicated mathematical patterns and sequences using technical mathematical terms correctly.
- In some lessons, information and communication technology is used creatively to stimulate pupils' interest and to help them understand aspects of history, such as the life of Florence Nightingale with Year 2, or, in religious education lesson with Year 5, the parable of the mustard seed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is true in class and around the school. They contribute positively to the caring culture of the school and understand how their behaviour can affect others. They are polite to each other and the staff, and the school ensures that appropriate behaviour is rewarded using 'Golden Time' to offer pupils interesting and alternative activities on a regular basis.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons. They have very positive attitudes to learning, and do not misbehave even when lesson activities are not sufficiently challenging or stimulating. They enjoy working in small groups and are ready to support each other in their learning. They work confidently and answer questions with great enthusiasm.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe at school and have confidence in their teachers to look after them well. The school runs regular cycle and scooter safety courses to help pupils stay safe on the roads. They also have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using computers and the internet.
- The older pupils look after the younger ones on the playground, and play leaders are quick to ensure that they have someone to play with and that play equipment is available and used sensibly at break and lunch times. Pupils in Year 6 take their responsibilities seriously and enjoy

their roles as play leaders and learning mentors as well as taking an active part in some assemblies.

- Pupils know about the different types of bullying and say that there are some instances in school, but these are relatively rare. When they do happen, pupils know who to go to and are confident that it will be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Punctuality at school is very good. Attendance has improved over the last year and is now broadly in line with national averages.
- A recent survey of parents' opinions completed by the school shows that most parents are happy with the way the school looks after and supports their children. However, this was not reflected in the responses found on the Parent View website, nor in some of the answers offered by parents who spoke informally to the inspectors. The main concerns arise from a perceived lack of effective communication with the school despite an informative weekly newsletter to parents and carers. Also parents expressed some dissatisfaction with the amount of progress their children were making and a significant number would not recommend the school to other parents.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher and senior leaders have not made sure that teaching is consistently good enough to help pupils achieve well.
- The senior leaders have not established an agreed method to measure how well pupils are doing, and teachers are not always able to accurately measure their attainment and progress. Some discrepancies were identified during a recent local authority visit. These are now being addressed. Also, leaders have not checked that the school marking policy has been used consistently well to help pupils to move forward and make good progress.
- Governors and senior leaders were surprised to learn of the dissatisfaction of a number of parents as expressed on Parent View. Consequently they have not yet been able to address these concerns through the school development plan.
- The school has recently had a number of changes of staff. The headteacher has used the existing skills within the school to ensure that its ethos and caring atmosphere have been maintained and enhanced by the new teachers, but not yet to share the most effective teaching practice.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to meet the aptitudes and interests of the pupils, as well as ensuring that they are able to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and literacy skills. Numeracy skills are not yet as well catered for across the full range of subjects. Pupils are introduced to a range of books and stories to stimulate their interest and support their learning.
- The school has worked closely with the local authority to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to develop the teachers' ability to accurately check pupils' work against national standards. The local authority recognises the work the school has done and feels that it is making steady progress in both areas of development.
- The primary sports funding has been used to enhance class teachers' knowledge and skills in

sport and physical education. A physical education specialist from a local school has coached them in a range of skills and, as a result, pupils are able to participate in a wider range of sports. This has yet to be fully reflected in improvements in pupils' performance or physical well-being.

- The school takes its responsibilities for safeguarding very seriously, and takes robust measures to keep the pupils safe.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body contains a good range of skills and expertise to guide the school. Governors understand their role clearly, visit regularly and are working closely with the headteacher to guide improvements. They regularly receive reports from the headteacher and the local authority. However, they do not always interpret the available information accurately and do not hold the headteacher sufficiently to account. They are proud that the school is regularly oversubscribed but had not fully appreciated that achievement has declined.
- Governors do not always use the available information about the school robustly enough to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They recognise that they are working with a number of relatively new teachers and regularly monitor how they are progressing. Targets set for staff and the headteacher are informed by the school development plan and the national *Teachers' Standards*.
- The governors know how the budget is spent and monitor the impact of additional pupil premium and sports funding on progress and standards.
- They see safeguarding as an important aspect of their role and have undertaken the necessary training. They now realise that some parents are not happy with the management of the school but have yet to find a realistic strategy to develop a positive relationship with the group of dissatisfied parents.

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	117496
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	444085

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Davies
Headteacher	Helen Lines
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2009
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