

# St John's Catholic Primary School

Rochester Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2SY

**Inspection dates** 15–16 July 2014

|                                |                      |             |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Good</b> | <b>2</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Good        | 2        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Good        | 2        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Outstanding | 1        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Good        | 2        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points to reach standards in English and mathematics which are above average national rates by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good, with examples of outstanding teaching throughout the school. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the different subjects they teach, and of pupils' abilities and interests.
- Pupils have an extremely positive attitude to learning. This makes a strong contribution to their progress. They behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school, feel completely safe and are not concerned about bullying.
- The school promotes all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well.
- The school's curriculum enables pupils to develop a very wide range of skills and interests.
- The headteacher and his senior team have focused relentlessly and successfully on raising the quality of teaching. This has significantly improved pupils' progress.
- Governors are very well aware of the school's strengths and are strongly determined to ensure that they improve still further.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and a very large majority say they would recommend it to others.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Pupils are not yet making very rapid progress because school leaders have not yet succeeded in raising the quality of teaching to outstanding.
- Teachers do not always check pupils' progress thoroughly enough during lessons.
- Teachers do not consistently follow up the comments they make on pupils' work to ensure that pupils have acted on their advice.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 24 lessons, several of them together with the headteacher and other school leaders, for varying amounts of time. They observed all the classes in the school and all the teachers present during the inspection at least once. Inspectors made shorter visits to a number of other lessons and activities, attended an assembly, looked at pupils' written work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, members of staff and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also held informal discussions with a number of parents and carers.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress and data on attendance. They examined safeguarding procedures and records of the school's own lesson observations as well as the school's self-evaluation, performance management and planning documents.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of 63 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. They also considered the results of the school's own most recent survey of parents' and carers' views, a letter from a parent or carer and 55 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

## Inspection team

Robin Gaff, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Roger Parry

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Nicholas Rudman

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- Just over one in eight pupils is eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for children who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is above the national average. Just over one in 10 pupils is supported through school action. The proportion of pupils, about one in 20, who are being supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the school's previous inspection, there have been several changes in staffing. These include the headteacher, who was appointed in January 2013, as well as a number of senior and middle leaders.

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

- Enable pupils to make consistently very rapid progress by making sure that teachers always:
  - check pupils' learning and progress regularly throughout lessons so that they can adapt activities if pupils are working at a faster or slower pace than they had anticipated
  - ensure that pupils benefit fully from the comments and advice they are given.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school in the Nursery and Reception classes with levels of knowledge and skills which vary considerably but are often below those expected for their age. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above average. This includes pupils with different abilities and from different backgrounds, as well as those who speak English as an additional language.
- The standards pupils reach indicate that they have made good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children develop good communication skills. They gain a secure grasp of phonics (the links between sounds and letters), which enables them to make good progress in learning to read and write. Children also learn to count accurately and to work and play independently and with others.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, so that by the end of Key Stage 1, they can use their phonics skills to read and write at levels which are above those found nationally. They can solve mathematical problems using numbers and words. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils showed that they could count, multiply and divide using multiples of two.
- In the national tests in English and mathematics in 2013, potentially high-attaining pupils' results showed that they had not made as much progress as they could have done. Leaders accurately identified the causes of this relative underachievement. Their swift and effective action in improving the accuracy and frequency of the school's systems for assessing pupils' progress has led to a rapid acceleration in pupils' progress throughout the school. As a result, current Year 6 pupils, as indicated by the standard of their work and their provisional test results, have made good progress in reaching the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Pupils who are eligible for extra funding achieve well. This is because the school uses the money to good effect by, for example, employing teaching assistants to give additional support to individual pupils and small groups.
- In 2013 the attainment in English and mathematics of those Year 6 pupils who were eligible for additional funding indicated that they were just over a term behind other pupils in the school. However, their attainment was in line with that of all pupils nationally and was above that of the equivalent group of pupils in the previous year. The standards reached by those pupils who currently qualify for extra support show that gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils are closing still further.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English benefit from well-tailored support, both inside and outside the classroom. This enables them to achieve as well as, and in some cases better than, their classmates, and demonstrates the school's successful commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their skills and knowledge in a wide range of subjects. These include art, music and French, where pupils reach high standards, especially in speaking and listening, by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils make consistently good progress in lessons because of the good teaching and support from which they benefit. When the pace of learning is slower than is typical, this is often because teachers have not realised that the work they have given pupils is too easy or too difficult for some groups.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers use their detailed knowledge of pupils' different abilities to provide them with activities that enable them to make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- Teachers have a strong grasp of, and are enthusiastic about, the range of subjects they teach. This enables them to explain topics and tasks clearly and to engage pupils' interest.

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of both behaviour and work. Throughout the school, they create an orderly, stimulating and purposeful atmosphere in their classrooms. Teachers cooperate well with teaching assistants to ensure that all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are fully included in activities.
- For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher made sure that the pupils understood clearly the techniques they were to use in solving equations. He helped the pupils to work through well-chosen examples and gave them a variety of problems to solve which were well matched to their different abilities. As a result, pupils, including the most-able, developed their understanding of mathematical principles and processes, and made good progress in learning to apply them.
- Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 use their good knowledge of phonics to ensure that pupils successfully develop their reading and writing skills. They also help pupils to develop a strong appreciation of the value of and the pleasure to be found in reading. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can read confidently and accurately, and talk enthusiastically about the wide variety of books they have read. Their written work shows that teachers have ensured that they understand the importance of correct spelling and punctuation, and that they can write in a variety of styles and for different purposes.
- Teachers use questioning well to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding, enabling them to build upon what they have already learned. They do not always check frequently enough during lessons to see whether pupils are finding the work harder or easier than they had anticipated.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and accurately. They give pupils feedback which enables them to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work still further. Not all teachers, however, make sure that pupils have heeded and acted upon their comments by, for example, correcting or extending their work.
- Most parents and carers believe that their children are well taught and that they make good progress.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are highly attentive to teachers, and their willingness to heed very quickly their requests and instructions shows how keen they are to learn. Pupils' extremely positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their learning and progress.
- Pupils take a great deal of pride in their work and make sure it is very well presented. They take part enthusiastically and purposefully in classroom discussions. In the Nursery classes, children learn quickly to take turns and listen when others are talking, and pupils throughout the school maintain this attitude to a high degree.
- Around the school, pupils are highly considerate of one another. Pupils from different backgrounds get on extremely well together and there is no hint of any discrimination. They learn to value each other's different cultures, traditions and languages. Many pupils take on positions of responsibility, for example, as play leaders or 'reading ambassadors'. A high proportion of pupils take part in charity fund-raising activities. These factors illustrate the school's very strong promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Attendance is well above average. The school has been extremely effective in helping the small number of pupils who have found it difficult to live up to its expectations to improve their behaviour, and in a few cases, their attendance.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have no fears about their safety in school. They understand very clearly how to keep themselves and others safe, for example when using classroom equipment or the internet.
- Pupils are not concerned about bullying. They help one another quickly to resolve any rare disputes or disagreements and are completely confident that staff will intervene promptly and effectively if necessary.

- Pupils and their parents and carers, as well as staff, express extremely positive views about pupils' behaviour, and about how well the school looks after them and makes sure that they are safe.

## **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher and his senior team have rigorously assessed all aspects of the school's performance and accurately identified its strengths and relative weaknesses.
- Senior leaders have been steadfast in their commitment to eliminate weak teaching and have ensured that it is now consistently good. They have done this by regularly observing lessons and examining pupils' work, giving teachers robust and supportive feedback and providing them with extra training where necessary.
- Leaders have given teachers demanding but realistic targets, and have made sure that any pay increases are explicitly linked to their progress in achieving them. They have also succeeded in ensuring that staff fully support their drive for improvement.
- Middle leaders, some of whom are relatively new to their posts, are playing an increasingly effective role in improving the quality of teaching and in raising achievement in the areas for which they are responsible.
- These factors demonstrate the school's capacity for further, sustained improvement.
- The local authority has played a very positive role in supporting leaders to achieve their aims, and by providing well-targeted training for staff and governors.
- School leaders make good use of extra money provided by the government to improve pupils' achievement and well-being. They use the pupil premium well to enable eligible pupils to attend after-school activities, music lessons and school trips, as well as for extra teaching and support. The school is spending the new sports premium funding on providing pupils with a broader range of sports and on increasing teachers' ability to teach them. As a result, pupils' participation in physical activity and the standards they reach are rising.
- The school's curriculum provides a very good match to pupils' abilities and interests. Pupils benefit from a wide range of trips, special events and after-school clubs, which include many different sports, as well as music and drama. Sports funding is well used to promote pupils' participation in sport and to enhance their well-being. Year 6 pupils told inspectors how much they had enjoyed their recent visit to France. This was also evident from the enthusiasm with which they performed poems they had written about their experience of watching the Tour de France.
- A large majority of those parents and carers who responded to the Parent View and the school's own survey or spoke to inspectors expressed positive views about their experience of the school.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because leaders' actions have not yet resulted in teaching being good enough to result in outstanding achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have an accurate view of the school's performance, including pupils' achievement and how it compares with that in other schools, and the quality of teaching. They are fully aware of what leaders have done to improve teaching, and of how pay rises depend on teachers' success in raising pupils' achievement. They have ensured that the school's finances are in good order. Governors know how additional funding, including the primary school sports funding, is being used raise standards and to increase opportunities for pupils. Their experience and expertise, and their knowledge of the school, enable them to hold leaders firmly to account. Governors also ensure that all requirements for safeguarding pupils are fully met.
  - Governors are highly ambitious for the school. They are determined that pupils, as well as reaching their academic potential, will continue to benefit from its particular character and its caring and supportive ethos.

## 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> | 118755 |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Kent   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 441244 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

|  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                           |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary aided                   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–11                              |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                             |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 719                               |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Mark Bruce                        |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Jonathan Shields                  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 2–3 March 2010                    |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01474 534546                      |
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