

St Thomas A Becket Catholic Junior School

Tutts Barn Lane, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 8XT

Inspection dates 16–17 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Strong and effective leadership of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body has ensured that the school's good overall effectiveness has been sustained since the previous inspection.
- Good teaching helps pupils to make good progress and achieve well from their starting points when they join the school.
- Attainment in English and mathematics is consistently above average. Pupils develop particularly high reading skills because of the successful emphasis placed on this aspect of learning.
- Teachers plan lessons which link subjects well and interest pupils so that they enjoy their learning and want to do well.
- The school gives pupils excellent opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds respect one another's views and learn together well.
- Pupils' good behaviour makes a strong contribution to the school's positive atmosphere for learning. They are keen and eager to take advantage of the many opportunities on offer.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe are thorough. Pupils say that they feel safe.
- Staff and governors are determined to make the school even better. Consequently, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always use the information they have about pupils' earlier successes to set work which helps pupils to fill in any gaps in their learning.
- Teachers do not routinely require pupils to show that they understand the advice given when written work is marked.
- Occasionally, teaching assistants do not use effective approaches to helping pupils to master their reading and calculation skills as teachers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, as well as the teaching for small groups of pupils.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading in Years 3 and 6, attended assemblies and held discussions with pupils from across the school. They looked carefully at a wide range of pupils' written work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body, and members of the teaching staff, and a telephone call was made to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with parents before the start of the school day, and took account of 28 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and additional contacts made by parents.
- Inspectors looked at many documents, including records of pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school, attendance records, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, safeguarding procedures, records of lesson observations and the governing body minutes.

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Roger Fenwick

Additional Inspector

Alison Marshall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Thomas A Becket Catholic Junior School is larger than the majority of primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased since the previous inspection and is greater than that found in most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since 2010, the school has worked in federation with the adjacent infant school. The headteacher of the junior school became headteacher of both schools in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in supporting pupils to make the best progress of which they are capable by:
 - ensuring that teachers identify any gaps in pupils' earlier learning and set work which helps pupils to catch up quickly
 - giving pupils time to check that they understand and act on the advice given when teachers mark their work
 - increasing the impact of teaching assistants on pupils' learning by making sure that they are trained to use the most effective approaches to the teaching of reading and calculations.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They are strong role models for the school community in demonstrating respect for the individual. As such, any potential discrimination is tackled effectively so that all can learn in a positive atmosphere where achievements are celebrated.
- The staff team is using the recently enhanced federation arrangements with the infant school to review its practice. Joint training across the two schools is strengthening teachers' understanding of Key Stage 1 learning and ensuring that pupils' skills are built systematically upon their learning prior to joining Year 3. This is making a good contribution to improving teaching quality.
- Senior leaders and staff are diligent in keeping pupils safe and that safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- The school works closely and effectively with the local authority and external partners. Consequently, the school has an accurate and realistic understanding of its own performance. The good support from local authority advisers last year is reflected in a rapid rise in pupils' writing results in the 2014 national tests. Planning for future improvement is detailed and based on the right priorities.
- The performance of staff is managed well. Effective appraisal systems are based on pay awards which are dependent on the impact teaching has on pupils' progress. Staff work well together to share planning and offer support for colleagues to review and improve the quality of teaching. Middle leaders play a full role in monitoring the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Collective worship is a strong feature of school life. Pupils know the importance of their own faith and their community responsibilities, and have many opportunities to develop their wider understanding of other religions and cultures. Pupils have a good understanding of life in modern Britain and are respectful towards one another. They show concern for others less fortunate than themselves through, for example, raising funds for a cancer charity and contributing to food banks.
- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities within lessons and through visits and clubs to enrich their experiences. This was seen during the inspection when a theatre company visited with a performance and workshops on *Treasure Island*. Literacy and numeracy are linked very well to learning in other subjects. Learning is made relevant through activities such as financial management with a bank, enterprise with a local business and environmental projects through the borough council.
- The primary school sport funding is used effectively to give pupils more sporting opportunities than previously. Professional sports coaches, additional resources and training of staff to teach physical education ever more successfully are contributing well to pupils' physical well-being and health. The emphasis placed on sport and the arts enables pupils to enjoy much success in these areas. Participation in extra-curricular activities is high.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well because they spend time with staff and pupils. They have an accurate understanding of its work. For example, they recently reviewed the school's approach to managing behaviour, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that pupils feel safe and happy.
 - The governing body knows how well teachers and pupils are doing because representative governors join evaluation meetings with local authority advisers and review pupils' progress information regularly. Consequently, they hold the school to account for the quality of its work.
 - Governors and senior leaders use their understanding of the school's work to track and allocate resources where they will have the most impact. This includes the allocation of funding for disadvantaged pupils and the school's sports funding. Decisions about teachers' pay are linked closely to performance and quality teaching.
 - The governing body is committed to improving the school further and governors take part in training to ensure that they keep up-to-date.
 - They ensure that the school's procedures to keep pupils safe at school are thorough and meet requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are friendly and welcoming, and enjoy talking about their school

and work.

- In the playground, behaviour is outstanding as all pupils are involved, keeping active or happily engaged in their own pursuits. Pupils play cooperatively in ball games or with playground equipment. They understand the need for playground rules to stay safe and respond quickly at the end of playtime.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, settling quickly to their work, and take a pride in it so that their books are well presented. They listen carefully to their teacher's instructions and explanations, and to the views of their fellow pupils. Mostly, pupils work without distraction. Occasionally, when they do not find the work challenging or if it is too difficult, they begin to chat, but refocus quickly when asked to do so by the teacher. They respond well to the consistent routines and expectations for their behaviour.
- Pupils take on a number of responsibilities. The members of the school council are known and pupils say that they would go to them if they had any concerns. The school council has been instrumental in developing the life of the school, for example through the introduction of 'Fruity Friday' to promote the importance of fruit in a healthy diet.
- Attendance is in line with the national average. An increase in absence a year ago, often due to holidays taken in term time, has been reversed because of the concerted action taken by the school. Persistent absence has always remained below average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe, and most parents agree.
- Pupils are aware of e-safety and the school has given workshops for parents to ensure that awareness of the dangers of mobile phones and social networks are kept on the agenda. Pupils know what they should do if they see an inappropriate statement or message, for example, to use the 'Whistle Icon' and to keep their parents informed.
- The school uses a number of outside agencies to help to give pupils the skills to keep themselves safe. These include a 'Safety in Action' day where pupils learned about 'stranger danger'. Visits from the police have focused on road safety and bullying.
- Pupils have an awareness of different types of bullying and understand the school's systems to reward and improve behaviour. Pupils are confident to approach an adult for help. There have been few exclusions and recorded incidents of derogatory or discriminatory language since the previous inspection.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching means that pupils make consistently good progress through the school. The teaching of reading is particularly strong where pupils make exceptionally good progress.
- The work in pupils' books confirms that teaching is good, and the school's records indicate that this was also the case last year. Their books show that pupils take a pride in their work and want to do well. Pupils say that they enjoy learning. Parents spoken to in the playground and in response to the inspection questionnaire are positive about the impact that teaching has on their child's progress,
- Teachers are particularly skilled in making work interesting for pupils. For example, a 'rap' helped Year 6 pupils to consolidate the concept of mean, median and mode. Pupils then applied their knowledge using real-life data on temperature and weather.
- Teachers ensure that lessons start promptly and that time is generally used effectively. The short weekly basic skills sessions help pupils to strengthen their spelling and tables skills well. Nevertheless, teachers do not consistently plan learning which is based on a close scrutiny of the most recent work to identify small gaps in pupils' learning. Consequently, sometimes the work set is too difficult for some and more-able pupils spend too long on work which they have already mastered before being given more challenging tasks.
- When pupils are identified as not making good progress over a longer period of time through the school's regular monitoring system, action is taken promptly. The school uses a range of interventions which boost pupils' progress over a few weeks so that identified gaps are filled quickly.
- Many teaching assistants are skilled and give pupils strong support, particularly for individuals who find learning more difficult. Occasionally, because a few have not had sufficient training, they do not use as effective methods as teachers, for example in using phonics (letters and their sounds) to help pupils to improve their reading skills or the same methods for multiplication.
- A particular strength is the way teachers encourage pupils to learn through discussion. Pupils are mature in the way they work cooperatively in groups, share their ideas and ask each other questions to move their learning forward. Consequently, pupils take responsibility for themselves, and are regularly seen consulting reference materials such as prompt sheets and dictionaries, and recording new words in their

personal spelling books.

- Teachers' marking is regular and gives pupils clear advice about how their work can be improved. Nevertheless, pupils are not routinely required to respond to the written comments so that teachers can check that their guidance had been understood fully. In classes where this is the case, pupils quickly eliminate earlier misunderstandings or apply new skills.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection and is good in all areas of their learning. Consequently, pupils' attainment in the Key Stage 2 assessments in reading, writing, grammar, punctuation, spelling and mathematics is above average. It is consistently high in reading.
- In 2014, as a result of a whole-school focus, there was a sharp improvement in writing. This brought pupils' results in the Year 6 assessments closer to their results in reading. Pupils' writing is often inspired effectively by their study in other subjects. For example, Year 5 pupils developed their skills of report writing quickly when they researched, made notes and then compiled a report for their 'Meet the Greeks' information booklets about culture in Ancient Greece.
- The school's continuing promotion of reading fuels pupils' enjoyment of their learning across subjects. For example, pupils record the books they have read on class charts. This encourages others to match the rate of the most avid readers. Those who read for inspectors used their phonics knowledge successfully to decipher and read unfamiliar words.
- Almost all pupils reach the nationally expected levels in the Year 6 tests. The school's tracking information shows that those who do not reach these levels make at least good progress from their starting points when they join the school.
- All groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, progress at similar rates. Those in need of additional support are given the help they need by teachers and teaching assistants, often within lessons but also in a wide range of small-group interventions. This demonstrates the school's determination to ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted for all pupils and any potential discrimination is tackled effectively.
- The most-able pupils have high aspirations and are mostly achieving the higher levels by the end of Year 6. They enjoy their work and are generally prepared well for secondary education. However, there are some occasions when the most-able pupils are not challenged enough to do their best.
- Regular homework effectively helps pupils to consolidate their knowledge of work in school.
- There are few disadvantaged pupils in the school. The careful tracking of pupils' progress and action taken if any pupil underachieves has resulted in disadvantaged pupils making a little more progress than their peers. Consequently, the gaps in their performance have narrowed from their starting points when they joined the school. Because of the differing abilities in different year groups, there is some variation in the overall picture from year to year. The provisional school information shows that, in 2014, the gap in standards between these pupils and their classmates was about two terms in English and three terms in mathematics. This was wider than in 2013 when the attainment of this group was in line with other pupils nationally.

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	114578
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	453033

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John McManus
Headteacher	Rachel Turner
Date of previous school inspection	29 February–1 March 2012
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