

St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School

Clover Way, Gadebridge Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 3EA

Inspection dates 19–20 November 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.

- Pupils are taught well and make good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, they reach standards that are significantly above the national averages.
- The headteacher, ably supported by staff and governors, provides effective leadership. Leaders have ensured that teaching is consistently good, so that all groups of pupils achieve well.
- Teachers demonstrate high expectations for the behaviour and achievement of all pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are given good help and guidance, so they achieve as well as other groups of pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good. They are proud of their school and grow up as confident learners, well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively through the way different subjects are taught, and through clear values that set high expectations for everyone.
- Governors are clearly focused on keeping standards high, and are effective in holding leaders to account for continued improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not ensure that the most able pupils are always challenged sufficiently to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work in mathematics is not as effective as in writing. It does not provide pupils with guidance consistently for further improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 lessons, three of which were seen jointly with the headteacher. In addition, they made a number of other short visits to lessons and observed small groups of pupils taught by teachers and teaching assistants. The inspectors also listened to pupils in Year 6 read to them.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 139 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), 10 parents' comments and the 28 responses to the staff questionnaire. They also talked to parents as they visited the school.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' books and at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its performance, school improvement planning, documentation relating to teachers' performance over time and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Angela Savill

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is broadly average in size compared to primary schools nationally.
- The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion who come from minority ethnic groups is below average, and the proportion learning English as an additional language well below.
- Approximately 14% of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for disadvantaged pupils in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. This is an average proportion.
- Around 12% of the pupils are disabled or have special educational needs. This is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There were some staffing changes last year as three experienced leaders left to take up promotions elsewhere. These positions have been filled and three new teachers joined the school in the current year.
- The school is a member of the local schools community, and works closely with other Catholic schools and the Archdiocese of Westminster.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress in all subjects further by ensuring that:
 - tasks set in lessons take full account of what pupils can already do and are sufficiently demanding for all groups of pupils, particularly the most able
 - marking in mathematics provides pupils with consistently clear guidance on how to improve their work to achieve even higher standards.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders show high expectations of pupils, encouraging them to be ambitious in their aspirations. Leaders and governors have successfully identified and addressed the areas for improvement raised by the last inspection. This has resulted in sustaining the good quality of teaching and subject leadership, despite changes in staffing over the past year. Staff and parents responding to inspection questionnaires are very positive about the work of the school.
- The quality of teaching is monitored effectively, as senior and subject leaders observe lessons regularly to identify areas for improvement. This is effectively linked to a comprehensive training programme for staff. Rigorous procedures ensure that all teachers are held responsible for their pupils' achievement. Teachers are set challenging performance targets which are reviewed regularly.
- Subject leaders, including the recently appointed ones, have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and carry them out enthusiastically and effectively. This is because they are very well supported by the senior leaders.
- The new curriculum is well planned and includes rich learning opportunities which help all pupils to develop good attitudes to learning. Music, art, drama and French play an important role in pupils' life in school. The vast majority of pupils play one or more musical instruments. They organise their own musicals based, for example, on *Oliver* or *Peter Pan*. They also organise concerts at the end of the summer term and at Christmas. They joined the Rotary Club essay competition for the last 19 years, taking first or second place in sixteen of these.
- Visits from famous national and local authors enrich pupils' enjoyment of reading and learning about different styles of writing. Developing pupils' understanding of different religions helps them to reflect on the connections between spirituality and action in their own lives. All these activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- The primary school sport premium is used to provide a specialist teacher to lead high-quality physical education lessons, and to train staff to raise their expertise in sports. This is helping pupils to learn new skills and increase their awareness of living a healthy life. The participation rate is high and they thoroughly enjoy taking part in inter-school competitions.
- The school's focus on ensuring that all groups of pupils achieve well is reflected in the opportunities for all pupils to enhance their learning and skills through a wide range of subjects, activities, events and clubs. The pupil premium funding is used very effectively to ensure that the disadvantaged pupils achieve well. They are supported very well in classrooms as well as in small groups.
- The local authority has provided very effective support, especially in developing the school's new assessment system. The leaders have worked closely with the local authority in this and have made good progress. Staff also work closely with other local schools, sharing good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well organised. It is highly supportive but also ensures that leaders and staff are sharply focused on raising pupils' achievement. Governors play several roles, including monitoring pupils' learning during lesson observations. A well-managed range of committees monitor the effectiveness of the leadership team in improving all aspects of the school's work. Governors have attended training on analysing data and know how pupils' performance compares with that of schools nationally. They are aware of how the school is using the pupil premium and primary sports funding, and the impact they have had on pupils' achievement. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance, and ensure that teachers are rewarded only when they are able to raise achievement. Governors ensure that the procedures for safeguarding pupils are effective and meet

national requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are proud of their school, and friendly and welcoming to visitors. They enjoy coming to school and the wide range of opportunities that it provides. They have good attitudes to learning, listen attentively to teachers and respond immediately to instructions.
- Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities such as being members of the school council and raising funds for national and international charities. They reflect on the conservation of trees and the local environment. Pupils wrote a letter to the Prime Minister expressing their views about the importance of saving trees and other environmental issues; the encouraging reply acknowledged their concerns and praised their efforts to look after the school environment.
- The school uses effective systems to promote good attendance. Good attendance is rewarded and poor attendance is followed up rigorously. As a result, attendance is above the national average.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because occasionally, a few pupils begin to lose concentration if the work does not fully challenge or engage them.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school at all times. They have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They understand the dangers of misuse of the internet and social networking sites, and know what to do if they should encounter such problems.
- Pupils are well aware of the different forms bullying can take, including cyber-bullying, and say that it is rare in school. They have every confidence in their teachers that any such incidents will be dealt with quickly, describing their teachers as 'helpful, generous and patient'. The overwhelming majority of parents are highly appreciative of the high quality of care and support the school provides for their children.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good across the school. Excellent relationships between all adults and pupils help to promote good learning in all classrooms. Pupils listen to adults and each other with respect and work with each other well during lessons. As a result, there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in school.
- Teachers show that they have good subject knowledge and know their pupils well. They plan lessons well to make learning interesting and engaging. They ask searching questions to assess pupils' progress, extend their knowledge and understanding, and resolve any misconceptions. This was observed in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, where the teacher very skilfully built on previous work on the estimation of angles and the use of an 'axis' to help pupils learn to plot co-ordinates.
- Pupils are given opportunities to write for different purposes and to write at length. Guided reading sessions include stimulating discussions on different styles of writing by different authors. This supports pupils' writing skills well.
- Teaching assistants contribute effectively to pupils' learning, both in and out of classrooms. They show a good understanding of how to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They do this well, so the pupils make good progress.
- Teachers adapt tasks for different ability groups, but do not always make effective use of assessment information to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging to stretch all groups of pupils, including the most able.

- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and often give clear guidance on what they need to learn next, particularly in writing. In mathematics, the comments made are not always clear enough to help pupils know how to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Throughout the school pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is evident from pupils' work, individual case studies and the school's own assessments at the start of each school year. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain high standards, which have been significantly above national averages in all areas since the last inspection.
- The most able pupils make good progress in all areas as they move up the school. Most of them develop a clear understanding of how to write effectively for different purposes and the application of four operations of mathematics for calculations and problem solving. They read a range of texts by different authors and demonstrate good understanding of a variety of writing styles. However, sometimes they are not challenged sufficiently to perform as well as they can to reach even higher standards.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their different starting points. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that the help and guidance they provide meet pupils' needs effectively, both in the classroom and when they are being taught in small groups elsewhere. As a result these pupils make good gains in their learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium make similar good progress to their classmates. This is due to very effective support for them within the class as well as in small groups. In 2014, the gaps in attainment between these pupils and others in Year 6 narrowed considerably compared to 2013. They were roughly two terms behind in reading and in writing, four terms in mathematics and three terms in grammar, punctuation and spelling. The gaps in attainment compared to all pupils nationally also narrowed. They were two terms behind in mathematics, and less than a term behind in grammar, punctuation and spelling. The gaps in reading and especially writing were even smaller.

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	117468
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	448483

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	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patricia Jane Gonzalez
Headteacher	Bernadette Quinn
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2010
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