

St Polycarp's Catholic Primary School, Farnham

Waverley Lane, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 8BQ

Inspection dates 10–11 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		1	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		1	1
Quality of teaching		1	1
Achievement of pupils		1	1
Early years provision		1	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher is firmly committed to raising pupils' achievement and has sustained high standards since the previous inspection. Her vision is shared by the highly effective governing body and the dedicated staff team.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Reception class due to the first-rate provision in the early years.
- Pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Their standards are well above average by the end of Year 6.
- High-quality teaching engages, challenges and motivates pupils. Information on pupils' achievement is very accurately used to plan work for pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They have extremely positive attitudes and rise to the expectation that they will make every effort to succeed.
- Pupils feel entirely safe in school. They are very supportive of each other, attend very well and are punctual.
- Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. 'I couldn't have chosen a better school', was typical of their comments.
- The range of subjects and activities offered by the school stimulates pupils' interest and successfully promotes their academic and personal development. An extensive range of sporting and cultural activities develops pupils' physical and emotional well-being.
- Extensive work has been done to develop a manageable and useful assessment system, taking into account the new National Curriculum. The school is working successfully to establish this system.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 27 lessons. Some lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also made a number of other short visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and records of pupils' behaviour, safety and attendance. They also looked at information on individual pupils' progress, anonymised records of teachers' work towards their targets, and records of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with pupils and teachers and spoke to parents and carers. They also spoke to three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents and carers were obtained through the 65 responses to the online Parent View survey. Written comments from 37 members of staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Rob Crompton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jeffery Staton	Additional Inspector
Bruce Waelend	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than the average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are White British; the proportion from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- Over a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is an above average proportion and has increased rapidly over the last two years.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium, is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children who are looked after by the local authority or those known to be eligible for free school meals. In 2014, the number of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was very small.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average. These needs relate mainly to moderate learning or physical difficulties.
- Children in the early years attend full time in two Reception classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher is a Local Leader of Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Fully establish the new assessment system, ensuring that teachers use this as effectively as possible so that pupils continue to make outstanding progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, in close partnership with her deputy, has created a highly motivated leadership team. She has a relentless determination to sustain high standards. This is evident in pupils' attainment which, over the last six years, has been consistently above average. Expectations are high within an outstanding environment for learning.
- Leadership responsibilities are shared and this helps to ensure a collective sense of purpose. The school's values – 'family, friends, sharing, peace, kindness and forgiveness' – permeate all aspects of its work.
- Leaders and governors are fully committed to equality of opportunity. They are highly successful in achieving this goal and extremely good relationships abound at every level. Deeply embedded values ensure an environment where all pupils can access everything the school has to offer and discrimination has no place.
- Middle leaders, such as those in charge of subjects, make a significant contribution to school improvement. They are highly competent, enthusiastic and innovative. Every member of staff willingly takes on a leadership role, for example, as a 'shadow' subject coordinator.
- The quality of teaching is checked regularly through lesson observations, alongside looking at pupils' work and the meticulous tracking of their progress. Effective teaching methods are shared and further training is provided when appropriate. Any variations in the quality of teaching or anomalies in pupils' achievement are speedily addressed.
- The local authority has every confidence in school leaders and governors, and provides appropriate 'light touch' support. As a Local Leader of Education, the headteacher provides support for other headteachers and deputy headteachers, particularly those new to headship or new to leading a Catholic school.
- Statutory requirements regarding safeguarding are met and systems are very effective. Meticulous records are kept and staff training is up to date.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used very effectively, for example, to provide daily reading support. Leaders keep a sharp eye on its impact on pupils' achievement, which closely matches and sometimes exceeds that of other pupils.
- The government primary sports funding is used to good effect. Specialist coaches work with teachers and pass on their skills. Participation rates are high, with pupils often joining clubs outside school after enjoying activities such as sports and dance at school.
- Strong support for the increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language helps to ensure they make similar progress to that of other pupils. School leaders check that teachers adopt appropriate strategies during lessons, such as visual reinforcement of key ideas.
- The rich and relevant curriculum has an excellent impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and allows them to excel in all areas. Music and sport are areas of particular strength. Computing and art are also subjects where high-quality learning is promoted. Opportunities for pupils to compete in local and national competitions are eagerly embraced with some notable successes. British values are promoted successfully through an emphasis on tolerance, fair play and respect for all faiths and cultures. As a result, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have wide-ranging skills and are highly effective in holding the school to account. They know how well the school is performing in comparison to others. They are fully aware of how to interpret data on pupils' achievement and often attend discussions between school leaders and teachers about how different groups of pupils are getting on. This enables them to ask insightful and probing questions. Each governor is assigned a year group to keep an eye on and an aspect of the school development plan to follow up. This first-hand information, together with the headteacher's reports on her evaluation of teaching, helps governors to gain an accurate picture of the quality of teaching. This feeds into decisions about salary progression which take into account pupils' rate of progress. Governors make sure that teachers' good performance is rewarded and they are fully aware of how any underperformance by staff would be tackled.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are extremely polite, courteous and respectful. They have an unbridled love of learning and a desire to be successful. They demonstrate this in lessons, where they work hard to meet challenges, and at break times where they play with great energy and enthusiasm, at the same time keeping an eye out for others.
- Low-level disruption is very rare and usually involves pupils with a diagnosed condition, meaning that they have difficulty in managing their own behaviour. Pupils are remarkably empathetic, understanding that 'this is not always their fault'.
- Pupils take great pride in their school and enjoy taking up the many responsibilities they have to make a positive contribution. For example, Year 5 pupils take pride in mentoring younger pupils.
- Pupils respect the learning environment. No litter was seen and pupils help to keep classrooms neat and well organised.
- Parents and carers are extremely positive about behaviour. They were fulsome in their praise of the way the school provides an environment where pupils behaviour is exemplary.
- Attendance is well above average, the school being in the top 10% nationally last year.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Staff are fully trained and risks are carefully assessed. Governors fulfil their safeguarding duties very well, for example with regard to ensuring safe recruitment of staff.
- Pupils say that bullying is virtually unheard of but they are clear about what bullying involves, how to combat it and how to deal with it.
- Pupils feel entirely safe and are taught how to avoid potential hazards outside school, such as when crossing roads. They are well aware of e-safety guidelines. One of their e-safety posters, for example, included, 'Would you leave the door open? - then why do it online?'
- Derogatory language is extremely rare but when it happens it is dealt with quickly and highly effectively.

The quality of teaching**is outstanding**

- A high level of challenge in the work set, backed up with clear explanations and skilled questioning, helps to ensure pupils learn exceptionally well and make outstanding progress.
- Expectations are consistently high and pupils are set increasingly demanding tasks which they relish. A strong culture of mutual respect, combined with academic excellence, is a feature of all classrooms.
- In reading, writing and mathematics, the close match of work to pupils' abilities enables all groups to make rapid progress, including those lacking confidence and the most able. Teachers are highly skilled in capturing pupils' interest and in drawing on and extending their knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching assistants are well briefed, understand the needs of pupils and are very effective in supporting different groups of pupils, including the most able. Teachers and teaching assistants regularly check on pupils' learning during lessons, anticipating where they need to intervene to overcome gaps in understanding.
- The homework completed by pupils is of exceptionally high quality and reflects their diligence, enjoyment of learning and the high expectations they have of themselves.
- Teachers provide excellent feedback through their marking. In the older classes, pupils often instigate a written dialogue with their teachers, rather than the other way round. This is an indication of how pupils rise to the opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- A newly introduced assessment system gives teachers a clear indication of the pupils who are exceeding expectations or falling behind. It involves pupils, with their teachers, identifying precisely what they should do to improve. The system is proving successful, although it is not yet fully established across the school.

The achievement of pupils**is outstanding**

- For the past six years, pupils' attainment by the end of both key stages has been significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. They make outstanding progress through the school. They do particularly well in writing where, last year, progress was exceptionally rapid compared to national figures.
- Children enter Reception with levels of skills and knowledge that are generally in line with those typical for their age. The highly effective provision in the early years helps to ensure they make rapid progress so that they are very well prepared to enter Year 1.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make), starts in Reception and continues through Key Stage 1. Pupils do well in the Year 1 phonics check and almost all of those that do not meet the expectations at this time catch up by the middle of Year 2.
- Reading is promoted very effectively throughout the school; for example, pupils were celebrating World Book Day during the inspection. Most become fluent readers. When discussing their reading preferences, pupils in Year 6 made insightful comments. 'I much prefer books to films', said one, 'because there's more detail and you can imagine for yourself.'
- Pupils' skills in writing accelerate quickly through the school. They rise to teachers' high expectations. Pupils are taught to craft their writing and do so exceptionally well. When writing on the theme of 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow', for example, a group of boys opened with, 'The last of the moon's eerie glow shone through the maze of withered trees', and sustained this high quality throughout the piece.
- Pupils' high levels of attainment in mathematics are evident not only in the assessment data but in their workbooks. Their calculation skills increase rapidly through the school. This is because teachers ensure a thorough grounding in basic mathematical ideas such as place value. During the inspection, about a quarter of the Year 6 pupils were working broadly at the levels typically expected by Year 9. They were adept at creating algebraic formulae to represent number sequences, showing understanding, flair and creativity.
- High-quality work was also evident in science, art and music and especially computing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported exceptionally well. By Year 6, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is typically higher than that of similar groups of pupils nationally, and almost all make impressive progress.
- There were too few disadvantaged pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in the last two years to make any meaningful comparisons between their achievement and that of other pupils. Throughout the school these pupils make similar excellent progress to their classmates.
- The achievement of pupils with English as an additional language at the end of Year 6 in 2014 was well above average. Almost all of the few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds did just as well as other pupils.
- The most able pupils progress exceptionally well across the school. Their performance in national tests in all subjects in 2014 was outstanding, with an above average proportion attaining at the highest level in reading and writing, and in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- Outstanding provision in the early years means that all children make rapid progress. There is a continuous and successful emphasis on personal development, alongside the development of early skills in language, communication and number. By the end of Reception, most children reach a good level of overall development which provides a very secure foundation for work in Year 1.
- Children respond with great enthusiasm to the high-quality teaching. Teachers plan imaginative activities and skilfully use the indoor and outdoor resources. Pupils are inquisitive and work very well together, sharing resources and talking about their learning.
- Children's care and welfare are at the heart of the provision. Children are very familiar with daily routines and behave exceptionally well. They move without fuss between different areas both indoors and outside.
- Leadership is very effective. Child-initiated learning, an area for development during the last inspection, has been a priority. Outdoor provision has been improved to allow pupils to choose freely from indoor and outdoor activities and follow their own interests. All aspects of practice are frequently reviewed and children's achievement is checked, moderated and analysed regularly. This allows leaders to finely tune the provision to improve outcomes.

Inspection judgements

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	125206
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	449368

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	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary McGrath
Headteacher	Ann Gunn
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2009
Telephone number	01252 716307
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