

St Edward's Catholic Primary School

New Road, Sheerness, ME12 1BW

Inspection dates

25–26 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Progress is uneven across the school and so pupils do not always achieve as well as they should.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are not yet consistently good. Too few pupils reach the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Teaching requires improvement because the quality of teaching is not consistently good or better across the school.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' achievement. They do not challenge them sufficiently with appropriately harder work or support less-able pupils effectively to do the best they can.
- Pupils' handwriting, spelling and grammar skills are not high enough. Consequently, their achievement in writing is weaker than their achievement in reading and mathematics.
- Although pupils generally behave well, they sometimes lose their focus on learning when teaching does not fully engage them.
- Although there are some strengths, overall, the early years provision requires improvement to give children the best start to school.
- Senior leaders, including governors, are effectively developing the skills of teachers and challenging weaknesses robustly. However, they know more needs to be done to secure good teaching and good progress for all pupils.
- Senior leaders have not yet made secure improved systems and procedures to provide clear guidance and expectations for all staff on teaching, learning and behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides very effective leadership and has rapidly made significant changes to improve the school. As a result, teaching and achievement are improving.
- Pupils enjoy learning and want to do well. There are positive relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and they are polite, friendly and respectful.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and ensure that pupils feel safe and secure in school.
- The school's values promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The governing body holds leaders to account effectively for the school's performance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 10 lessons, most of them together with the headteacher or other staff with key leadership roles. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work, looked at pupils' work in books, listened to some pupils read and observed pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and other staff with key leadership responsibilities. Discussions took place with governors, a representative from the diocese and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including: the school's own check on its performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at the 17 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. They also considered the 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Hare

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after.
- In 2014, the school did not meet 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.
- Provision is made for the early years in a Reception class which children attend full time.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership and staffing, and it has been a period of considerable turbulence. The new headteacher was appointed in April 2015 and the governing body has changed since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in order to accelerate progress in every year group and raise standards by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - all pupils are challenged to do their best by providing effective support for less-able pupils and more demanding work for the most-able pupils
 - more pupils reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6
 - behaviour does not slip in lessons because pupils are not fully engaged in learning.
- Raise achievement in writing by:
 - improving pupils' skills in spelling, handwriting and grammar.
- Improve leadership and management by providing greater clarity on expectations and guidance for teaching, learning and behaviour.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Considerable turbulence in leadership and staffing since the previous inspection has had a negative impact on the pace of improvement. Over time, the quality of teaching has not always been good enough to enable pupils to make good progress across the school and reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The new headteacher has, in a short space of time, secured the confidence of staff and pupils in the leadership of the school. There is now a shared sense of purpose and the determination to improve, and morale is high. One member of staff expressed a view shared by many with the comment, 'There is a real sense of moving forward and making progress for the staff and the children. The new management has worked hard to promote this atmosphere and encouraged us all to aim higher and expect more.'
- The headteacher, supported well by the governing body and the local authority, worked rapidly to tackle the areas to improve identified in the previous report. Rigorous monitoring gave a clear indication of where the improvement needed to be made. Following significant changes in staffing, weaknesses in teaching are being tackled. Teachers are receiving appropriate support and guidance, and underperformance is challenged. As a result of professional support, challenge and guidance, inadequate teaching has been eradicated and standards are rising. This shows that there is the capacity for further improvement.
- Leaders, including the governing body, are, however, fully aware that there is not yet enough teaching that is good or better to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. They are also aware that the raised expectations for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress now need to be made secure in the policies and practice across the school.
- The management of teachers' performance is now more closely linked to pupils' progress and information from looking at pupils' work, and teachers know that they are accountable.
- The headteacher is now sharing responsibilities with the assistant headteacher, and senior and middle leaders, who are making an increasing contribution to the development of their subjects and areas of responsibility. New appointments have been made for September 2015 to increase leadership capacity further.
- The school fosters good relationships between all its pupils and between pupils and staff. Equality of opportunity is promoted and reinforced in school values. However, leaders are aware that currently some pupils are not learning as well as they might.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively through the school's Catholic values and the curriculum. Pupils are accepting and tolerant of difference and diversity, and leaders ensure they learn without fear of discrimination of any kind. They are effectively prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of subjects and experiences for pupils. Literacy and numeracy skills are emphasised appropriately, although there is some inconsistency in expectations of teaching the basic skills of handwriting, spelling and grammar. A range of extra activities including clubs add to the experiences provided. Special events, such as the history week taking place during the inspection, motivate and inspire pupils. The whole school studied and learnt about the history of a local area and presented their findings in a special assembly.
- The school is making effective use of the primary physical education and sport funding. This includes increasing the skills of teachers and pupils by working with specialist coaches.
- Additional funding to provide a range of support for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. The gaps between the achievement of these pupils and their classmates, and compared with that of others nationally, are beginning to narrow.
- Although not all of the small number of parents who responded to the online questionnaire are positive, and some indicate concerns about the school, most of the parents who spoke to inspectors valued the improvements that have been made in the last three months. Not surprisingly, several of their concerns were regarding the previous high turnover of staff in certain classes and the disruption this has caused them and their children.
- Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and are effective. Leaders are vigilant in ensuring that all staff know the procedures and carry them out efficiently to keep pupils safe.
- The local authority has been instrumental and effective in supporting the school, particularly to improve teaching and learning, and in providing challenge and support to the leadership, including governance. As a result, leaders are now effectively driving improvement.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance has strengthened significantly since the previous inspection. The current governing body is committed, actively involved in the school, and shares the ambition and aspiration of the headteacher to continue to improve the school. Governors know the school well, its strengths and areas for improvement. There is now a good level of expertise. One governor is a National Leader of Governance and others offer skills in a range of areas. Governors have undertaken a considerable amount of training, supported by the local authority and the diocese, and are clear about their roles and accountability. They are now well informed about all aspects of the school's work by leaders and through their own monitoring visits. There is a good knowledge of the data on achievement, which are analysed in detail by an assessment and standards group. As a result, governors are able to provide good levels of challenge and support, and effectively hold the school to account for its performance. They fully support the headteacher in expecting nothing less than good or better teaching and the actions taken to tackle underperformance. They know that performance management and a robust training programme are helping to improve the quality of teaching and standards, and that pay progression is linked to pupils' progress. Governors have a very clear understanding of the pupil premium spending and the impact on pupils' achievement. They are currently less aware of the spending and impact of the primary physical education and sport funding. Governors are diligent in continuing to review their effectiveness in the support and challenge they provide.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Expectations and routines throughout the school are not consistent with the school's policy to promote good behaviour.
- The school's systems for recording and monitoring any incidents are not consistent and so it is not always clear how effectively issues are dealt with or followed up.
- Pupils generally behave well around the school, in the playground and in lessons, and have increasingly positive attitudes to learning. On occasion, however, pupils' behaviour in lessons hampers good learning. This is mainly when teaching does not fully engage them, and some become distracted and lose their focus on learning.
- Pupils are friendly and polite, and happy to talk to visitors about their work and their views about the school. They say that behaviour is better now than it has been in the past. They conduct themselves well in a calm, orderly environment.
- Pupils get involved in the local community through various projects. For example, Year 5 pupils enjoyed and gave serious thought to the regeneration of a local area, working with other local primary schools and a secondary school.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View are of the view that the school makes sure pupils are well behaved and that their children are happy at school.
- The breakfast club provides a safe and sociable start to the day.
- Attendance has improved and is closer to the national average, and the number of exclusions is reducing. Most pupils arrive at school punctually and ready to learn.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and are well looked after in school. Parents agree. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe from potential danger outside of school including e-safety.
- Pupils say that they are not aware of any bullying but have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying as opposed to just 'falling out with friends'. They are confident that if any incidents should arise, their teachers would deal with them effectively. They know they can talk to any member of staff, and particularly the pastoral support adviser, and that they will be listened to.
- The school meets all the safeguarding requirements.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and achievement is improving as a result. Checks on the quality of teaching show that some teaching is good but inconsistencies remain across the school.

- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough for what pupils can achieve and so they do not always sufficiently challenge pupils of all abilities. Sometimes, pupils struggle because they are not supported effectively, and sometimes, work for the most-able pupils is not sufficiently demanding.
- The teaching of writing is a focus for the school. Pupils enjoy writing and have frequent opportunities to write and produce imaginative and creative work. Their handwriting, spelling and grammar skills, however, hold them back. Reading for enjoyment is promoted well across the school and pupils are particularly enthusiastic about the school library. More focus is given in mathematics lessons to develop pupils' reasoning skills, which is helping to improve achievement.
- There are some good examples of marking and feedback that give pupils clear pointers on how to improve their work and there is an expectation that pupils will respond and correct any misconceptions. This is not consistent across the school.
- Displays are used effectively to support teaching and learning. In particular, 'working walls', showing pupils' work in progress, are used increasingly effectively.
- Pupils come to school ready to work hard and they want to do well. Positive and trusting relationships with teachers and teaching assistants mean that pupils are prepared to take risks with their learning and 'have-a-go' because they know that their views and opinions are valued.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because it is uneven from class to class and across subjects. Progress is uneven across the school. A legacy of weaker teaching and staffing disruption means that there are pockets of underachievement. However, achievement is improving and where teaching is good pupils learn well and make good progress. Progress overall has accelerated for all pupils over the last term because of the higher expectations and aspirations of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors.
- Currently, pupils' achievement in writing is weaker than it is in reading or mathematics. This is because standards in spelling, handwriting and grammar are not good enough.
- In 2014, standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. In reading and writing, many pupils made the expected or better progress from their different starting points. However, progress was not rapid enough for many to catch up in their learning and attain the expected levels.
- Pupils' work and the school's information on progress show that standards for the current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are on track to improve overall by the end of the year to above the most recent national averages.
- Too few of the most-able pupils make better than expected progress because some teachers' expectations are not yet high enough to help them achieve well. The proportion of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 on track to reach the higher levels is below last year's national average. There is, however, a marked improvement from 2014 in the proportion on track to reach the higher level in reading by the end of Year 2.
- Improvements in pupils' achievement in reading this year have been, in part, due to a greater promotion of reading and enjoyment of reading across the school. In addition, the introduction of an online reading programme is motivating all pupils and especially boys. Older readers can express their preferences for different authors and the types of books they enjoy most. However, not enough pupils have a good grasp of the higher-level skills to help them infer and deduce meaning from the text to increase the depth of their understanding.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Year 1 check on phonics (the sounds that letters represent) was below average. Currently, pupils use their phonic skills adequately to help them read unfamiliar words but not as well to help them spell.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils, which means that it is uneven in different year groups. The extra support they receive is well organised and closely monitored, and meets their needs effectively. However, the improved and effective provision for this group has not been established for long enough to see the full impact on their achievement.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils by the end of Year 6 was around 18 months behind that of other pupils nationally in mathematics and writing, and around eight months behind in reading. Compared to their classmates, disadvantaged pupils were around 10 months behind in mathematics and nearly 18 months behind in writing. They did as well as their classmates in reading. Their current progress, like other pupils, is improving overall but is uneven across the school.

The early years provision**requires improvement**

- Children start school in the Reception class with skills and knowledge below those typically expected for their age, especially in speaking, writing and number skills. Their progress during the early years has been uneven and requires improvement.. However, current progress is improving.
- In 2014, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was above the national average, although the current leadership is not confident that assessments were secure. The proportion on track to reach a good level of development in the current Reception Year is above the national average, and assessments have been checked and found to be secure by the local authority. This means that children are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- Leadership of the early years requires improvement. The early years leader has only been in post for a term and is the fourth teacher in the current year, which has been unsettling for children and their parents...The leader has made some rapid and effective changes to improve the provision and children's experiences. Senior leaders are correctly aware, however, that there has not been enough time to embed the changes to ensure that provision is securely good.
- Plans are in place for ensuring that children and their families who will start in September are welcomed and given a good start so that the children can settle quickly and happily into school life.
- Parents of the children currently in the Reception class have positive relationships with staff. They particularly appreciate the opportunities to attend 'stay and play' sessions and be involved in children's learning.
- Children behave well and enjoy learning. They play and learn together well, and develop independence and confidence.
- There is a balance of activities between those where children choose for themselves and those that are led by the teacher and other adults. Teaching is now effectively promoting children's learning, although this has not been the case in the recent past and teaching requires improvement.
- The classroom is now well organised, and all areas of learning are given appropriate emphasis through interesting and engaging activities.
- There is a very spacious outdoor area with a range of equipment and activities such as 'The Mud Pie Kitchen', which help promote children's enquiring minds and their language skills. The potential of the outdoor space has not yet been fully developed.
- The trained teaching assistants have good relationships with the children and their families, and make an effective contribution to the children's learning.
- Children's welfare is given high priority and they are kept safe and secure.

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	118757
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	453805

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Glock
Headteacher	Hayley Liddon
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 March 2013
Telephone number	01795 662708
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