

St Benedict's Roman Catholic Primary School

Lambourn Way, Lordswood, Chatham, Kent, ME5 8PU

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is led and managed well. The headteacher is the driving force underpinning the rapid improvements in teaching and achievements of pupils. She has ensured that the school is a harmonious community.
- Supported by school leaders and governors, the headteacher acted decisively and effectively to address a dip in the Key Stage 2 mathematics and reading results in 2014. These actions have secured rapid progress in the current year.
- The quality of writing is effectively supporting pupils' learning in other subjects.
- Teaching is good because teachers and teaching assistants plan well together and form very strong relationships with the pupils.
- Pupils are offered very exciting and enriching opportunities to think deeply and learn across several subjects outside their classrooms in the forest school. As a result, their reasoning and problem-solving skills are well developed.
- The early years provision is good. Children settle quickly and make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils work hard in lessons because they are very keen to learn. They are sensible when moving around the school and take their responsibilities very seriously.
- Pupils feel very well cared for and safe at school. They are remarkably knowledgeable about how to stay safe.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development outstandingly well in all of its work. The key Christian principles of valuing all, respect for others and serving the community underpin all aspects of the school.
- The school prepares pupils extremely well for the next stage of their education and for life in modern Britain.
- Governance is highly effective. Governors are exceptionally knowledgeable about the school's strengths and next steps. They are extremely rigorous in checking up on how well the school is doing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all pupils in Key Stage 1 and Reception are making as much progress as they can in reading.
- Teachers are not sharing their high expectations of standards in reading with pupils as they do in writing and mathematics.
- Children's progress in Reception is sometimes too slow because teachers do not make use of the information they have to plan their next steps in learning.
- The school's planning for the future is not precise enough to ensure rapid improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 14 lessons, as well as making other shorter visits to lessons. All lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors also observed two assemblies and pupils' behaviour in and out of lessons.
- The inspectors talked with groups of pupils, as well as individual pupils during lessons, to find out their views about the school. The team undertook a scrutiny of pupils' English and mathematics books to establish the quality of pupils' work. The inspectors listened to pupils read and observed sessions where phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) was being taught.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also held informal discussions with a number of parents.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation of its work and plans for improvement, its information on pupils' progress and attendance. They examined safeguarding procedures and performance management records.
- Inspectors took account of the 43 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and considered the 24 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Justina Ilochi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lesley Corbett

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Benedict's Roman Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average-sized school with a one form entry.
- The early years is made up of one Reception class and all children attend full time.
- The large majority of pupils are from a White British heritage. The rest of the pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- About 10% of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs; this is broadly average.
- There have been numerous changes in senior and middle leadership, as well as teaching staff, since the last inspection. Several teachers are in their first or second year of teaching. The deputy headteacher returned from family leave during this inspection. The governing body was very recently reorganised and restructured.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers use a consistent approach to developing reading skills for all pupils in Key Stage 1 and Reception
 - teachers consistently make use of assessment information to plan the next steps in learning for children in the early years
 - high expectations of what pupils can achieve in reading are shared with pupils, just as in writing and mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that the school's development plans are more precise, with clearer timescales and targets that are linked to pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has provided the school with strong, effective leadership and clear direction despite the extreme turbulence of the last few years. There is a shared understanding of what is needed in order to raise achievement further. The school is a harmonious community and staff morale is high. As a consequence, behaviour throughout the school is outstanding.
- Staff performance is well managed. Staff have clear targets which are related to improvement in pupils' achievement and linked to salary progression.
- Middle leaders in charge of subjects have focused well on developing the curriculum (the subjects taught) and promoting pupils' knowledge and skills in reading, writing, mathematics and communication. They have applied their skills to planning for the full implementation of the revised National Curriculum. A good start has been made on implementing new systems to track and record pupils' progress in information and communication technology (ICT).
- The school uses a creative topic-based approach to develop its curriculum. Pupils are offered very exciting and enriching opportunities to think deeply and learn across several subjects outside their classrooms in the forest school. As a result, pupils' creative, reasoning and problem-solving skills are developing exceedingly well. The creative arts and music are outstanding and the school has a well-established school orchestra.
- Leaders ensure that pupils learn well across an exciting range of subjects. The curriculum is further enriched through a range of well-planned activities and visits. Links with schools both nationally and internationally develop pupils' understanding of cultures and lifestyles different to their own. This wide range of social and cultural events contributes to pupils' strong understanding of what it means to live in modern Britain. Displays in corridors and classrooms confirm that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is exceptionally well developed.
- The school's evaluation of its own work is accurate because senior leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Leaders maintain a rigorous focus on raising achievement and this has ensured that pupils' attainment and progress in Year 6 improved rapidly this year compared with 2014. The school's pupil tracking systems indicate that a greater proportion of pupils in all year groups made rapid progress this year. However, the school's development planning is not precise enough to sustain continued improvements in the future. This is because it does not have clear timescales and targets that are closely linked to pupils' progress.
- The checking of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by senior leaders is rigorous and well planned. This has helped the headteacher to identify and eliminate weaknesses in teaching. Consequently, the quality of teaching is consistently good and has a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Funding available through the pupil premium is used effectively to finance additional support and resources which help eligible pupils make at least similar progress to their classmates.
- Additional funding from the government to promote sport and increase physical activity is being used to employ professional coaches and to develop the expertise of the staff. Pupils' participation in a wide range of competitive tournaments has increased and these opportunities have a very strong impact on pupils' health and well-being.
- The school is committed to ensuring that every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed. This can be seen in the work of speech and language therapists employed by the school to ensure the good learning of pupils with special educational needs. This has ensured that these pupils are developing communication skills exceptionally well.
- The school is extremely vigilant in safeguarding pupils. Systems are robust. All staff and governors understand procedures and how to carry them out. A strength of the school is the way pupils are cared for, guided and supported in their learning and personal development. The school fosters excellent relationships and ensures that there is no discrimination. Effective transition arrangements ensure pupils are well prepared at the end of every year for the next stages of their learning.
- Almost all the parents who responded to Parent View, and those who spoke to inspectors, were confident that the school is being led and managed well.
- The local authority provides an appropriate level of support. It is effective in helping the school to review its quality of teaching and its impact on the achievement of pupils. The local authority is confident that the school is providing a good education and has the capacity to continue improving.

■ The governance of the school:

- The recently restructured governing body uses its skills and experience effectively to influence the school's work. The governors are well informed about how well the school is performing because they are well trained to understand the school's data. They regularly visit the school and check the information and reports from the headteacher and other leaders. As a result, they effectively hold school leaders to account for school improvement.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and the link between teachers' performance and salary progression. They are aware of how good teaching is rewarded and how underperformance is tackled.
- Governors ensure that additional grants, such as pupil premium funding and the additional funding for sport, are used effectively and are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are friendly, courteous and very welcoming to visitors. They are immensely positive about learning. Pupils carry out the tasks they have been given meticulously and with pride. They take particular pride in their writing and their work is displayed with utmost care everywhere in the school.
- Staff and pupils are very positive about behaviour at the school. Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. Pupils concentrate very well in class and are taught to cooperate exceptionally well with each other when working in pairs or small groups. Pupils' social skills are extremely well developed as a result.
- The majority of the parents' very positive responses to the online questionnaire confirm the inspection evidence that pupils' outstanding behaviour continues to be a strength of the school.
- Pupils show respect for the differing views and cultures of others. They build on what they have been taught about British values and understand about the need for respect, tolerance and responsibility. Assemblies and religious education lessons also help pupils to challenge views and provide opportunities to debate ethical issues.
- Pupils come to school smartly dressed and take care of the school and their own property. Instances of poor behaviour are extremely rare and are tackled swiftly when they arise; as a result, pupils make good progress.
- Pupils understand that there are different forms of bullying, but they say there is no bullying in the school. They know what to do if they have any worries themselves. School records show that bullying is very rare and is dealt with effectively when it occurs.
- Pupils are given the opportunity for quiet Christian prayer every morning to reflect on their world, work and behaviour. This helps them to relax and keep calm throughout the day and learn well. Pupils display high levels of care and consideration for others.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that they feel very safe at school and parents who spoke to inspectors totally agree. Pupils know how to stay completely safe, including when they are using the internet.
- Older pupils are very keen to fulfil their areas of responsibility. For example, pupils in Year 5 who apply for and become road safety officers understand this prestigious role and take it very seriously. They are responsible for coordinating visits and assemblies on various aspects of safety. As a result, pupils' consciousness on issues of safety is very high.
- Safety arrangements and safeguarding are very rigorous. Members of staff are unwaveringly focused on the welfare of the pupils at all times, including when pupils are working or playing outside.
- Older pupils are clearly visible at break times to help keep the younger ones safe. Only a few accidents are recorded because pupils know to take care when running about or playing with games equipment.
- A strength of the school is its ability to foster good relationships between pupils and in preventing any discrimination. Very high levels of trust and respect exist between staff and pupils. The nurturing atmosphere encouraged in the school enables pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, to communicate with each other and adults extremely well. This has contributed to their feeling of safety and their good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good across the school. There are examples of outstanding practice in some year groups. A rigorous focus on improving teaching in Key Stage 2 has ensured that pupils are learning at a faster rate this year.
- All lessons have a clear focus on what pupils are going to learn. This ensures that pupils know what skills they are developing and helps them to know whether they have been successful.
- Excellent relationships between adults and pupils result in enthusiastic and confident pupils who enjoy learning and want to do their very best. Pupils work well together, either as a whole class or when required to learn in small groups.
- Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good teaching and additional support. Teaching assistants work in effective teams with teachers and play a valuable role in supporting pupils' learning. They have a clear understanding of their role and are knowledgeable about the difficulties of the pupils they support. This enables pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties to play an active part in all lessons and learn very well.
- Teachers question pupils skilfully to develop their knowledge and understanding. Pupils understand the importance of listening and taking turns. When pupils are answering, others listen carefully so that they learn from each other.
- Writing is taught exceptionally well. Teachers use every opportunity to get pupils to write often in most lessons. Pupils systematically master the basic skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling. They use these when writing for different purposes and across a range of subjects. They are encouraged to talk about a topic or share ideas with classmates, which strengthens their ideas and gives them confidence to start writing.
- The teaching of mathematics is strong and improving. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide challenging work for their pupils, which they enjoy. There are many opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical knowledge and skills in a range of problem-solving activities. For example, children are encouraged to apply their mathematical skills through the many enterprise projects that are offered by multi-national companies.
- Marking has been a recent school development priority and teachers write helpful and encouraging comments to assist pupils in improving their work. Pupils are kept well informed about how well they are doing and know what their next steps are in their learning, particularly in writing and mathematics. This is not always the case in reading where progress is slower than for writing and mathematics.
- In reading, teachers are not making sure that pupils understand what they are reading by teaching them to use a range of strategies to help them to read unfamiliar words. The school does not have a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters represent). As a result, a few pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1 and the early years, are not quickly learning to sound and blend letters.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved. Most groups of pupils, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds, are working at levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Achievement is securely good over time in all key stages, including the early years, and pupils make good progress from their starting points. Writing is a particular strength at the school and pupils produce high quality writing which showcases their learning across the curriculum.
- Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 continue to be broadly average. This represents good progress from the starting points of children in Reception in reading, writing and mathematics. This has been maintained in spite of the serious staffing issues of the last few years.
- Progress has improved rapidly in ICT since the introduction of the revised curriculum and school records show that pupils are doing extremely well. Pupils show a depth of understanding and are enthusiastic about learning programming which they link to the development of computer games.
- Pupils' outstanding attitudes towards learning contribute very well to their good or better progress. They do well during their time in school and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress and achieve well from their differing starting points. Their needs are identified quickly. Teachers and teaching assistants provide successful support in lessons and in separate specific group work.
- The most-able pupils make good progress and are suitably challenged in most lessons. They benefit from additional activities that give them the opportunity to work harder with pupils of similar ability in their class. As a result, most of them attain the highest levels in writing and mathematics in Year 6.

- The few disadvantaged pupils in each year group have caught up with their peers and are making good progress. In 2014, they were between a term to one year behind their peers in the school in reading, writing and mathematics and broadly in line with their peers nationally. This year all gaps closed. This was confirmed by a scrutiny of the school's records and their books.
- Pupils of all ages are encouraged to develop a love of reading and enjoy the wide range of texts available for them in the school library. However, pupils' progress in reading is not as fast as it could be. This is because targets for improving reading in order to meet high expectations are not shared sufficiently with pupils, so they are not working hard enough. For example, pupils' books show that pupils have clear targets for improvement in writing and mathematics, but not for reading as targets are not as clear as they should be.

The early years provision

is good

- Most children are working below the levels typical for their age when they join the school in the early years provision. They make good progress across all areas of learning, leading to an average proportion achieving good levels of development and attainment by the end of the Reception year. Consequently, they are well prepared for joining Year 1.
- Teaching is good and the newly appointed early years teacher, supported effectively by school leaders and the local authority, is establishing good practice with a team of teaching assistants. As a result, children's reading, writing and problem-solving skills are developing well. There is little difference between the attainment and progress of the various groups of children, including the disadvantaged, most able and disabled children and those who have special educational needs.
- Children are particularly good at communicating with others and gain independence very rapidly. Their use of the sounds letters make to help them read and spell unfamiliar words is improving, but not fast enough. This is because the approach to the teaching of phonics is not systematically helping reading to develop well.
- Children's behaviour and safety are exemplary. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations for behaviour and are excellent role models for the children's social development. Children are exceptionally enthusiastic about their learning and concentrate very well on their tasks. Children feel very safe at school and, consequently, are confident about making choices about their own learning.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders are clear about how they can further enhance provision and they ensure that standards have been sustained since the previous inspection. They keep parents informed and make sure that they are involved in their children's education. They frequently share with parents their children's learning journals and photographs of the children at work that demonstrate how well they are doing.

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	118780
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	448823

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kieran Magee
Headteacher	Barbara Salamonczyk
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 June 2010
Telephone number	01634 669700
Fax number	01634 865570
Email address	office@st-benedicts.medway.sch.uk

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