

Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School

Little Wheatley Chase, Rayleigh SS6 9EH

Inspection dates	10–11 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Standards have risen across the school since the previous inspection in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Almost all teaching is now good, and in some cases it is outstanding. Teachers plan well and assess pupils' progress accurately.
- The leadership of the headteacher has been a significant factor in the school's recent improvement.
- The school's work to support pupils who have special educational needs or disability is exceptionally strong.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They look after one another well and reflect the school's values.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. They feel safe and are very proud of their school.
- Governors have clear understanding of the school's strengths and what it needs to do in order to continue improving.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Children are keen to learn in a bright and welcoming environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching requires further improvement in a very limited number of classrooms.
- Too little time is spent preparing children in the Reception classes for the move into Year 1.
- Some subjects, particularly art and design and technology, are not as well taught as others.
- The teaching of phonics (the link between sounds and letters) in the Reception classes is not as well developed as it is at key stage 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review the teaching of art and design and technology so that these subjects are consistently well taught.
- Improve the use of space in Reception classes when phonics is being taught.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils in the Reception classes to prepare for the transition to Year 1.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has very successfully steered the school through a period of rapid improvement. His determination to provide a good quality of education for pupils has been adopted by many of the teaching and support staff who are passionate about 'getting things right' for pupils. This culture of higher expectations and striving to be better has also impacted positively on pupils, who are very enthusiastic about their school.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate. The improvements made have been tracked and next steps are firmly in place. Leaders know that more needs to be done to improve learning and have implemented a system of monitoring the quality of teaching that engages all members of the teaching staff. Teachers, and their line managers, have regular meetings (known in school as 'learning conversations') which unpick the methods and strategies that teachers are using to promote better learning. These are successfully supporting the improvement of individual teachers' work and have helped to create an environment in which teachers feel able to discuss with confidence what is going well and what needs more work. In addition, effective performance management arrangements are in place to improve teaching by holding teachers to account for the learning in their classrooms.
- A significant number of new teachers have joined the school since the last inspection. This has been well managed and new and potential leaders have emerged from within the whole staff. Teachers are keen to take on new 'projects' and to make things better. Subject leaders are very clear about their priorities and are seeking opportunities to promote their own subjects across the school. As a result, pupils enjoy events such as science week immensely.
- The school's curriculum sets out clearly how all the subjects within the national curriculum are taught. Leaders' checks to ensure that subjects have been fully covered have identified strengths in areas such as science, religious education and history – in addition to English and mathematics. Leaders are aware that other subjects, especially art and design and technology, have not been covered to the same extent and that, resultantly, pupils' learning in these subjects has been limited. Within this picture, there is evidence of some high-quality art work that pupils have produced.
- The range of extra-curricular activities, including those that take place before and after school, is good. Pupils and parents value the opportunities that these activities provide.
- The school's use of additional funding, including the sports and pupil premiums, is carefully audited. Where interventions are working, they are continued and expanded to other pupils. Where they are not seen to be effective enough and are not providing value for money, they are halted and efforts and funding are refocused.
- Work to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effective. The school's Catholic values are communicated very clearly, in an age-appropriate manner, to pupils from the point that they join the school. These values are interwoven with the effective promotion of British values through curricular opportunities. Visits and visitors enrich pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in the school because the leadership in this area is excellent. Staff know precisely what they doing with each child, and leaders monitor their progress closely. Accountability is distributed to those providing the support, and this means that learning support assistants are empowered to use their initiative to tailor interventions and support programmes to suit the pupils' needs.
- The school and the local authority have jointly funded participation in a three-year school improvement programme to work with school leaders to support their work. This has been successful and the systems that have evolved are now firmly established and are helping to drive further improvements. The local authority has audited this support and has found it to be effective.
- The school communicates well with parents and families through regular newsletters and also via a well-organised website. Around a fifth of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, during the inspection felt that the information that they receive is not adequate, but inspectors could not find evidence to support this. In a similar way, around one in seven parents stated that they would not recommend the school but many fewer who expressed their views through the 'free text' facility on the questionnaire were negative about the school. The overwhelming majority of comments were extremely positive and many celebrated the fact that the school is very much at the centre of a

Catholic community, despite many pupils living some distance from the school and travelling by car or bus. Inspectors also spoke to 42 parents at the start of the school day. Of these, only one expressed dissatisfaction of any nature with the school's work.

■ **The governance of the school**

- The governing body understands what the school needs to do in order to improve further.
 - Governors regularly visit the school and attend leadership meetings to secure a clear awareness of how things are working.
 - They hold leaders to account for the work that they do, providing challenge and support appropriately.
 - They are ambitious for the school.
 - The governing body audits its own work rigorously with a view to constant improvement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Systems and procedures, including those for checking the suitability of new staff to work with children meet requirements. Pupils who are most at risk are well known to staff, and the support provided for these pupils and their families is of a high standard.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved across the school. A culture of open reflection about what makes effective teaching has contributed significantly to this improvement. Teachers meet regularly to discuss pupils' achievements and share what has worked and what has had less impact. The results of this are seen in the accelerated progress that pupils have made in this academic year.
- Lessons run smoothly. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive and are rooted in learning. When asked to identify the best things about their school, many pupils immediately nominate their teachers. One pupil, speaking for many, said of the teachers, 'They are great and will do anything to help you.'
- Lessons are carefully planned. What teachers want pupils to learn is clearly communicated. Pupils are also asked to explain how they will know if they have been successful. This is especially well done in English where pupils are very clear about what they need to do. In mathematics, pupils are sometimes less aware of precisely what will make the lesson a successful one because the teachers are too vague about what they want pupils to do.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils have risen significantly since the last inspection. The impact of this can be seen in the progress made this year. Teachers' ambition for pupils is having most impact on the most able pupils who are producing work of a very high standard – especially in their writing. Inspectors found instances of pupils working at a much higher level than is expected for their age at key stage 1. A good example of these raised expectations was seen in Year 1 where a teacher asked pupils to add sophisticated grammar to their work. Pupils were able to do all this successfully, although some needed several attempts to do so.
- Some excellent teaching is leading to very rapid gains in pupils' learning. An example of this was observed in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, where pupils were excited and motivated by their learning. They could not wait to get to work and show how well they could solve their problems.
- Teachers provide pupils with feedback and guidance that is in line with the school's policy. In most classes, pupils respond well to this feedback and try to improve their work and demonstrate that their learning has moved on. This is not yet consistent in all classes.
- Teachers assess pupils' work effectively. An assessment system, built around the revised national curriculum, is being well used to both check on progress and ensure that any gaps in learning are understood and revisited. Teachers moderate one another's work to ensure that they are making consistent judgements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident learners. They are keen to participate in lessons and respond positively to a challenge. When offered a more challenging problem to solve, a pupil in Year 1 asked his teacher if it could be 'the hardest challenge ever please'.

- Pupils understand and support the school's values. They frequently demonstrate their capacity to help and look after other pupils during the school day. For example, a child accidentally dropped some of her packed lunch in the dining hall and several pupils tried to be the first to help her pick it up. Similarly, playtimes are harmonious and busy with games and activities. Many of these are selflessly organised and set up by pupils for the benefit of others.
- Pupils are keen to take up opportunities to be healthy through physical activity. There are several after-school clubs and physical education lessons are very popular. Additionally, the school runs cooking classes for some disadvantaged pupils which focus on making healthy food fun.
- Pupils understand how to be safe. Large proportions of pupils say that the school is free of bullying, and those who have experienced it say that it is sorted out very quickly by adults. The key messages communicated to pupils during an online safety day are remembered and cited by many pupils when asked about how to stay safe in this arena. This event was also attended in the evening by 150 parents.
- The school council contributes to the school's work in a meaningful way. Its projects include supporting the improvements in handwriting, and making sure that 'working walls' in classrooms are consistently used.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is consistently good. In lessons, pupils listen well and act swiftly on teachers' requests and instructions.
- Pupils are proud of their school and look after it well. There is very little litter in the playground because the available rubbish bins are well used.
- Levels of disruption are very low and are directly linked to the quality of teaching. Only when this dips, mainly due to the regular teacher not teaching a lesson, do pupils' high standards of behaviour slip.
- The school is working to increase pupils' independence so that they are less reliant on teachers' instructions and are confident enough to use their initiative more productively. There are signs that this is starting to work across the school but there is more work to do.
- Rates of attendance are above the national average and are improving. Rates of persistent absence are very low. Systems to follow up any absence are robust. Staff show real tenacity in finding out why a pupil is not in school. Rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils have been below average in the past. This is no longer the case and the school's work to improve this has been very successful: rates of attendance for this group of pupils are now above those for all pupils nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils are making good progress in English and mathematics. A scrutiny of pupils' work across the school showed that pupils are developing important skills in their writing from an early age. Pupils' mathematics work is equally positive as basic skills of numeracy are being learned and mastered before being applied to problem-solving activities.
- The proportion of pupils who are working at or above age-related expectations has improved steadily since the last inspection. In 2015, pupils left the school in Year 6 with standards that were in line with national averages. Current pupils in Year 6 are studying a different curriculum, but a higher proportion of them are working at or above the expected level. This pattern is consistent across the other year groups.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been consistently above the national level over recent years. This positive trend is set to continue this year. As a result of highly effective teaching, pupils in Year 1 are enthusiastic about phonics and delight in explaining how they can segment and then blend new and 'tricky' words.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 making or exceeding expected progress was similar to the national levels for reading, writing and mathematics. National data for the revised curriculum is not yet available but the school's own information shows a very positive picture for progress in English and mathematics in each year group.

- The number of disadvantaged pupils is small and varies considerably across year groups. When the assessment information on all disadvantaged pupils in the school is taken together, this group of pupils are attaining less than other pupils. However, the rates of progress that they are making means that they are catching up. Interventions have been put in place over the past 18 months that have been closely tailored to individual pupils' needs and this has had an impact. In some year groups, there is no difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress. These pupils receive high-quality support from teachers and learning support assistants. Their progress is tracked carefully and interventions are amended to suit their needs. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs or disability who responded to Parent View, or spoke with inspectors during the inspection, were exceptionally positive about the work that the school does in this area.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects. Their 'Come and see' work, focusing on religious education, is of a consistently high standard and provides pupils with valuable opportunities to apply their writing skills in different subjects. The quality of science is also good: pupils say that they enjoy science because it is investigative and they find things out for themselves, rather than being told. This approach is helping to feed pupils' curiosity and is leading to some high-quality science work.
- While several subjects, including history and geography, are well taught, this is not the case for all subjects. While the school has been focusing on ensuring that pupils' key skills in English and mathematics improve, the teaching of art and design and technology has not developed. As a result, the quality of pupils' learning in these subjects does not match that found in all other areas.
- The school's work to improve pupils' handwriting has been very successful. Pupils demonstrate a clear pride in their work and strive to gain a 'pen licence'. This starts at key stage 1 where many pupils are writing very well and forming letters clearly and legibly. By the time pupils reach the end of key stage 2, almost all of them have a well-developed handwriting style that is a pleasure to read.
- Pupils are well prepared for secondary school. They have acquired key skills in English and mathematics and have increasingly positive attitudes to their own learning.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enter the Reception class with a broad range of skills and knowledge. Some are above those typical for their age, some are in line with this and some are below. The proportions vary from year to year. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has been in line with the national average for the last two years. Children currently in the Reception class are on track to be well above last year's national level. Work in their books and their learning journeys supports teachers' assessments of these children.
- The leader of the early years started work at the school in September 2015. In a short time there have been many changes, including improvements to assessment and the use of the outdoor learning area.
- The outdoor area is a well-resourced space where children enjoy learning through a range of activities. Children are gaining important learning skills of resilience and investigation through a well-planned curriculum which presents them with a range of experiences and opportunities.
- Children behave well and cooperate with one another while they are learning and playing. Their families are involved in their learning through regular communication which starts when the child first visits the school. Parents are invited to share information about their child's likes and dislikes and what they are especially interested in. Additionally, other members of the family are also involved – as seen in the 'grandparents' day' in the autumn term.
- When it is time to teach phonics, the use of space within the classrooms limits the impact of the teaching. Two groups are taught at the same time in both classrooms and the levels of noise pollution prevents children from being able to listen to the teaching carefully enough. A review of how space is used when teaching phonics is required to ensure that children can more clearly hear the sounds that are linked to letters and groups of letters.
- There are too few opportunities for children to prepare for entering into Year 1. Previously only half a day has been dedicated to transition. This is being expanded to a whole day but this falls short of what is needed to ensure that children leave Reception fully ready to learn effectively in key stage 1.

School details

Unique reference number	115163
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10011824

This inspection 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	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Cowdrey
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Paul Parascandolo
Telephone number	01268 785741
Website	www.olorcps.net
Email address	admin@ourladyofransom.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups or have a first language believed to be other than English.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium is below average. (This additional government funding is for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The school met the government's current floor targets in 2015. These express the minimum expectations for what pupils should achieve by the end of their time in the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons and visited smaller groups of pupils in additional sessions. In all lessons, they evaluated the quality of pupils' work over time.
- Inspectors met with pupils formally and informally.
- Inspectors met with the chair of governors and five other governors. There were also meetings with a representative from the local authority and a consultant headteacher who has been supporting the school on behalf of the local authority.
- There were 150 responses to Parent View for inspectors to view. Inspectors also spoke with 42 parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors also took account of 203 pupil questionnaire responses and 48 staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors reviewed records provided by the school, including information about pupils' progress, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

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