

St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, Swindon

Davenwood, Upper Stratton, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 7LL

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are too variable in quality between subjects and across year groups.
- Pupils, particularly boys, do not make consistently good progress across key stage 1.
- Pupils who need to catch up make slower progress than others. This is because teachers are sometimes unaware that pupils have not understood what they need to do.
- Pupils in some classes rarely write completely independently and so teachers do not have an accurate picture of pupils' writing skills.
- Teaching is not yet good in the early years. The most able children do not make good enough progress from their starting points.
- Leaders do not have accurate assessment information to robustly evaluate pupils' progress by year group and subject. Consequently, they are not fully aware of any underachievement.
- Governors do not challenge leaders' reports sufficiently. They are not clear about which aspects of teaching need to improve and whether all pupils are making consistent progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have built a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are confident to report concerns and are vigilant for pupils' safety.
- Leaders want every child to succeed. They review pupils' work regularly to see if extra support is needed.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in lessons and in their individual programmes.
- There are now higher expectations of the most able pupils.
- Standards at the end of key stage 2 have been above the national average for the past two years. Pupils who took the tests in 2016 made very strong progress in mathematics across key stage 2.
- The teaching of phonics is good. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check has been above the national average for the last two years.
- Pupils behave well and usually take a pride in their work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and increase the rate of progress for boys and for pupils who need to catch up by:
 - teachers using the knowledge they have of pupils' different starting points and possible barriers to learning to plan tasks which are challenging but accessible
 - checking more frequently that all pupils have understood and are making progress with the task they have been set.
- Improve the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' writing by:
 - securely embedding the school's systems for regular sustained writing and assessed portfolios of work across all year groups
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to demonstrate their writing skills through open-ended writing tasks.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership by:
 - establishing a rigorous system of assessment that enables leaders to evaluate the performance of the school accurately
 - leaders thoroughly analysing and evaluating the information they have about the quality of teaching so that sharper targets can be set for improvement
 - governors being more demanding of the information they receive from leaders so that they can better track improvements to teaching and pupils' progress.
- Raise standards in the early years so that all children, particularly the most able, make good progress from their different starting points by:
 - using the assessments made when children enter school more sharply to plan challenging tasks
 - developing routines which ensure curriculum time is not wasted on activities which do not contribute to learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership requires improvement because leaders have failed to bring about teaching which is consistently good. Leaders have tackled aspects of weaker teaching robustly. There is, however, insufficient regular monitoring to identify the features of the strongest teaching across a range of subjects in order to share good practice.
- Leaders have not based the targets in the school improvement plan on a precise analysis of the progress pupils are making across the school. Targets are the same for each year group. Leaders have reviewed pupils' work and provided extra support where it is needed, but they do not have accurate and reliable assessment information that can be used strategically to set sharp and challenging targets for groups of pupils.
- As a result of changes to the school's assessment systems that followed the national changes in assessment since 2015, the quality of self-evaluation has dipped. This is because the school's new system is not as securely linked to progress of groups of pupils, and so pupils who need to catch up are not identified as a priority group.
- The executive headteacher knows where the school needs to improve. In particular, the school improvement plan identifies the need for improvement in self-evaluation, assessment and the training of governors so that they obtain a clearer picture of the school's effectiveness. However, these improvements have not been brought about swiftly enough for leadership to be good.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have brought about improvements to the standards pupils reach at the end of key stage 2. Equally, more children are now reaching the expected standard at the end of their Reception Year than was the case in 2014. The standards pupils are reaching in grammar, punctuation and spelling tests are high and pupils across the school have good spelling skills. Behaviour has improved.
- Leaders have implemented the new curriculum for reading and mathematics effectively, with appropriate training for teachers so that they can assess pupils' progress accurately. However, the curriculum for writing is too prescribed and the heavily guided writing that pupils produce is not reflecting what they can do independently. As such, the assessment of writing is insecure.
- The curriculum is broad and generally well planned. There is a wide range of events and activities which extend classroom learning. The school's teaching on fundamental British values is supported by its religious values and ethos. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. They talk enthusiastically about learning about other cultures and religions in their international days.
- The pupil premium funding has been used well and has had a positive impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The progress they made across key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, as reported in 2016 national tests, was stronger than that made by other pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading across the school.
- Leaders use the sport premium effectively and pupils have access to challenging sports, for example ice skating. Wider sporting opportunities engage pupils who may

not choose more traditional team games.

- Leaders have a strong commitment to equality and welcome pupils who may have had difficulties in other schools. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities flourish and resources are well targeted for these pupils. However, not all groups of pupils benefit equally from the teaching they receive.
- Parents are very positive about the school and the safe and encouraging environment teachers offer their children. Strong partnerships with other schools enable leaders to check assessments and share good practice.
- The school uses a private school improvement partner rather than the local authority. The school has been offered good advice but insufficient emphasis has been placed on the need for sharp evaluation.

Governance

- Governance requires improvement. Since the previous inspection, governors have formed a data committee to carry out regular checks on the progress pupils make. However, governors' understanding of the school's effectiveness is limited by the reports they receive. While they question leaders for clarification, they do not challenge the reports sufficiently to gain a full picture of where progress and teaching are strongest or weakest.
- The pupil premium funding is now better planned and evaluated than at the previous inspection. Governors have detailed knowledge of the key actions which have been put in place to improve achievement and they check these regularly.
- There is a robust approach to performance management of teachers, including that of the headteacher.
- Governors regularly undertake training. They have training planned to further develop their understanding of evaluation.
- Systems for safeguarding have been overseen and regularly checked by governors, whose specialist knowledge has contributed to the school's strong policies and practices.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated lead for safeguarding is uncompromising in her drive to keep pupils safe. She has developed a secure culture of vigilance where all staff are given high-quality and regular training. Staff alert the leader to any concerns they may have that pupils are at risk of harm, confident in the knowledge that she will take the appropriate action. Other leaders who deputise in her absence take equally robust action.
- The school recognises the risks that pupils could be exposed to, including child sexual exploitation and exposure to extreme ideas. They challenge any comments which could be homophobic or racist, and encourage pupils to develop a healthy respect for the views and beliefs of others. Leaders have identified a group of pupils who are particularly vulnerable and staff meet with them at regular 'check-ins' to offer support.
- Procedures for recruiting staff are rigorous and all checks and requirements for references are thorough. Risk assessments and policies are updated regularly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is still not consistently strong. Teachers do not plan teaching sufficiently well or check regularly enough to identify where pupils are having difficulty with their work.
- The level of challenge in lessons is often too high for pupils who need to catch up in their learning. When these pupils do not understand what is expected of them, they can become distracted and lose interest and so do not complete tasks.
- Not all teachers assess writing securely. Assessment is too often based on pupils following models of writing provided for them, rather than on what they can write independently. In Year 1, the teaching of writing is strong because teachers assess skills across independent as well as guided work. In year 6, pupils are already reaching high standards because their finished work is collected together and used to guide the next steps in teaching. This good practice is not yet consistently used.
- All teachers have raised their expectations of the most able pupils since the previous inspection. The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are rising to this new challenge in lessons and their work shows that they relish opportunities to apply new skills in writing, mathematics and science.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported by highly skilled teaching assistants and are able to attempt very challenging tasks with this skilled help.
- The teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling is good, reflecting teachers' strong subject knowledge in these areas.
- The teaching of phonics is good and recent changes to the teaching of reading have led to a greater focus on developing pupils' comprehension skills. This is helping current Year 2 pupils to meet the demands of the new curriculum more confidently.
- Teaching of science is good and teachers are developing pupils' skills of scientific enquiry well. Pupils apply mathematical skills in science through recording measurements in graphs and charts.
- Pupils are very positive about teachers' marking and the chance to respond to it. However, not all teachers check that pupils are correcting the mistakes that they have highlighted.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils eagerly accept responsibility. For example, the older 'buddies' support younger pupils in acts of worship and are proud to do so.
- Parents and pupils feel that school is a safe place where pupils are free from bullying and are 'one big community'. They have confidence in the school's anti-bullying 'ambassadors'. Pupils contribute to the school's anti-bullying policy and the ambassadors attend meetings to report back on any concerns pupils may have.
- Pupils are regularly taught how to stay safe and particularly how to keep themselves

safe with new technologies. For example, in a lesson, pupils discussed the seriousness of receiving unpleasant text messages and showed that they understood how harmful these could be.

- Generally, pupils' work is well presented and their books are well cared for. Although they understand the school's policy for marking their work and some said that they enjoy responding to their teachers' marking, their books show that pupils do not always take responsibility for making the corrections they are asked to do.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They move around the school quietly and are polite and courteous to visitors. Parents and pupils themselves are rightly very positive about the standards of behaviour in the school. The school is a very calm and orderly place to learn, and pupils understand and respect the rules.
- In the playground, pupils are lively but good natured with their friends and share equipment well. They know that they are expected to take 'time out' if they do not behave but the midday supervisors say this sanction is not needed often.
- In lessons, pupils mostly settle quickly to work and attend to adults when they are teaching or giving instructions. However, when pupils are left too long without a clear understanding of what they should do, they become restless and the standard of their behaviour dips.
- Leaders have provided good support for the few pupils with emotional needs who have displayed challenging behaviour in the past. The behaviour of these pupils has significantly improved and they are now making good progress.
- In 2015, levels of attendance were above average. Pupils have maintained a record of strong attendance and avoidable absence is rare. Where pupils miss more school than they should, the school takes prompt action to check their safety and improve their attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Currently, pupils are making inconsistent progress across the school, as seen in the information held by the school and in pupils' workbooks.
- Pupils' make insufficiently rapid progress in key stage 1. Attainment in reading has been lower than the national average because of weaknesses in boys' reading in particular. Whereas almost all boys reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2015, fewer than half of those same boys reached the expected standard in reading at the end of Year 2 in 2016. The school has provided targeted support for these boys to catch up, and has adapted teaching to strengthen pupils' skills in comprehension. In key stage 2, lower-attaining pupils make slower progress than their more able peers so widening the gap in attainment between these groups.
- The picture of the weaker progress being made by pupils who need to catch up was seen in their current workbooks. The difficulties they had in understanding the work in lessons was reflected in both mathematics and writing.
- Broadly, pupils made the expected rate of progress across key stage 2, with rapid progress in mathematics.
- There are few disadvantaged pupils in the school and none in some year groups. In 2016 national tests at key stage 2, the small group of disadvantaged pupils who had mostly entered key stage 2 at the expected standard then went on to make stronger progress than other pupils nationally. The most able disadvantaged pupils reached the new higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are consistently making good progress and the level of support they have in lessons is encouraging them to apply skills learned in their individual programmes.
- Pupils enjoy reading and the improved and now high standards in phonics are helping younger pupils to engage well and take on the good attitudes to reading that the school is promoting. They are beginning to gain stronger skills of comprehension with improved teaching. Older pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, read avidly and widely, and respond very positively to the 'genre bingo' which encourages them to do so. The most able readers who were heard reading are keen and confident readers.
- The level of attainment at key stage 2 in the national tests for the past two years has improved and has been a little above national average. Pupils are consequently better prepared now for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The majority of children start in the Reception class with skills and knowledge at least typical for their age. The proportion of children who reached a good level of development in 2016 was broadly in line with the national average.
- The teachers' assessments show that most children, including disadvantaged children, made good progress. The most able children, however, did not reach the higher level of attainment which had been predicted.

- Teaching is not consistently good in the Reception class. Planned activities do not always challenge the most able children or encourage them to apply what they know and can already do. Some activities lack depth or do not build on children's prior knowledge. For example, teachers' planning for a lesson on shape did not build on what the most able children already knew.
- When teaching has more depth, pupils respond enthusiastically. For example, when working with a teaching assistant, children responded well to her encouragement to mix the colours of the sea with their paint. They created wave patterns in different shades of green and blue, enthusiastically talking about their work.
- Although, over time, all aspects of the curriculum are taught, over a day too much time is spent on organisational features such as tidying up and getting coats. Routines for these activities are not established securely and so take longer than they should. Fifteen minutes every day are spent on singing along to taped music before going to lunch. The songs are chosen randomly and are not linked to any planned learning.
- Children are beginning to acquire phonics knowledge securely and to develop skills in simple writing. Improvements in the standards children reach in reading and writing have been at the heart of recent improved standards overall.
- Children in the Reception class behave well and play together cooperatively. They keep themselves safe by using equipment properly. They talk together, plan their play and can explain what they are doing. These good attitudes to learning will help them to move confidently into Year 1.
- Parents say they appreciate the good support for their children transferring into the Reception class. They find the staff caring and approachable. They contribute to children's assessments with information about learning from home.

School details

Unique reference number	138619
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10019968

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Marie Long
Executive Headteacher	Andrew Henstridge
Telephone number	01793 822 699
Website	www.stcatherines.swindon.sch.uk
Email address	head@stcatherines.swindon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the academy funding agreement or the list of directors of the academy.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is a little smaller than the average-sized school. The leadership team consists of an executive headteacher who is also the executive headteacher at a nearby school, and an associate headteacher.
- The majority of the pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is lower than average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 14 lessons or part-lessons, two of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors examined work in pupils' books in a range of subjects including English and mathematics.
- Meetings were held with pupils, with leaders and with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading and listened to them read.
- The 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. Inspectors also spoke with parents and carers.
- The views expressed in questionnaires returned by 21 members of the school staff were considered.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documentation including a report on a recent review undertaken by the school improvement partner.
- The school's safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Wendy Marriott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

James Hood

Ofsted Inspector

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