

St Catherine's Church of England Primary School

Park Road, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 0AW

Inspection dates

10–11 July 2018

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	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have been highly effective in addressing the school's previous weaknesses. As a result, the school is now clearly good and improving.
- The quality of teaching has improved as a result of the actions taken by leaders. Teaching is now consistently good throughout the school, and outstanding in the early years.
- As a result of improved teaching, pupils are now making much better progress. Results of the 2018 national tests were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders have ensured that staff are properly trained and that they know how to report child protection concerns when they arise.
- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They hold leaders fully to account and have played an active part in raising standards.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that pupils benefit from a suitable curriculum. The school's interesting curriculum motivates pupils and provides them with a good range of knowledge and experiences.
- The excellent early years provision gets children's educational careers off to a flying start.
- Pupils feel safe from bullying. They know that they should always tell an adult if they are concerned about bullying. Pupils know that staff will sort issues out quickly.
- Pupils behave very well both in their classrooms and during less structured parts of the school day. They play and cooperate well together.
- The most able pupils are not routinely challenged sufficiently in lessons. When this is the case, some pupils become restless and lose focus.
- Systems for recording behaviour and other incidents are not sufficiently well developed. Records do not allow leaders and governors to check for patterns of behaviour.
- Until recently, although improving, pupils' outcomes were below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain and consolidate recent improvements in the quality of teaching that have led to pupils making stronger and more consistent progress.
- Improve provision for the most able pupils by ensuring that they are routinely provided with sufficient challenge in lessons.
- Improve systems for recording behavioural and other incidents so that records are clear and complete, and any emerging patterns can be identified easily.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have been highly effective in improving outcomes for pupils, particularly over the last academic year. They have taken necessary decisions, sometimes unpopular ones, in order to improve the school. As a result, although the school's overall effectiveness dropped after the previous inspection, St Catherine's is now, once again, a good school.
- Leaders have focused well on improving the quality of teaching. They monitor teaching regularly by, for example, observing in lessons and looking at pupils' exercise books. Leaders have high expectations of both staff and pupils. These are reflected in the good teaching and learning that are now evident throughout the school.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is led and managed effectively. Leaders know pupils and their needs very well. They ensure that suitable different and additional provision is put in place to meet pupils' individual needs. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. The funding is used in a range of ways, including partially to fund the school's 'nurture' provision. This provides support for pupils' social and emotional development, when required, and is effective in giving disadvantaged pupils the skills they need to be effective learners.
- The school's curriculum is planned well. It provides pupils with a wide range of experiences and opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding. Some areas of the curriculum are taught using a topic-based approach. Other areas, such as science and religious education, are taught as stand-alone subjects. Leaders have found that this approach captures pupils' interest while ensuring that all subjects are covered in sufficient depth.
- The sport premium is managed well and used effectively. Leaders monitor carefully the effectiveness of how the funding is spent. They are able to show clearly the impact that actions have had on improving pupils' sporting achievements and helping them to develop healthy lifestyles. The school has achieved a coveted gold award for the last two years in recognition of its work in improving school sports.
- Most parents and carers are very positive about the school. A very large majority of the parents that responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that their children were safe and happy at school, and that they would recommend the school to other parents. One parent expressed the views of many by saying: 'I cannot praise the school and its leadership enough. My children are happy, safe and have the best time at school.'
- Leadership of subjects is becoming stronger and more effective. Leaders understand their roles well. They know what needs to be done to improve standards in their subjects and they ensure that appropriate actions are taken to do so. Leaders are starting to have a demonstrable impact on improving outcomes in the subjects that they are responsible for.

- Systems for recording incidents involving pupils are underdeveloped. Records are kept of behavioural incidents, instances of bullying and racist incidents but these are not as clear and as full as they should be. The current records do not allow leaders and governors to check whether there are any patterns to the incidents that take place. There is no suggestion that this weakness in record-keeping reflects any weakness in the way incidents are reported and responded to.

Governance of the school

- Governors hold leaders to account well. They ask challenging questions and do not accept information they are given at face value. This has helped the school to improve rapidly over the last academic year.
- Governors bring a good range of experiences and knowledge to the governing body. For example, several governors have backgrounds in education, while others work in finance and business. This broad range of experiences helps to give governors the skills they need to be an effective corporate body.
- Governors have high expectations of the school and its leaders. They are deeply committed to ensuring that the school is as good as it can be. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. This has helped them to ensure that the school is now on a firm upward trajectory.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's single central record meets statutory requirements. Systems are well organised and reflect a robust approach to the safer recruitment of staff. The school also ensures that appropriate checks are made on contractors and other adults who come into contact with pupils.
- Systems for reporting child protection concerns are well established. Staff have all received appropriate training to help them to recognise possible signs of neglect or abuse. Staff know what to do if they become aware of such signs and there is clear evidence that staff report concerns promptly.
- The school's designated safeguarding lead has a good understanding of the role. Records show that prompt action is taken in response to child-protection concerns, when necessary. Leaders are in the process of improving record-keeping systems for child-protection concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is now clearly good throughout the school. There is a consistency of approach that means that pupils know what to expect. Pupils know the established routines and follow them well. There is little fuss in classrooms and little learning time is wasted.
- Teaching staff in all year groups have high expectations of pupils, both in terms of how they should behave and of what they can achieve. Staff encourage pupils to try hard

and to do their best. They ensure that pupils follow the school's rules routinely. As a result, the school is a harmonious and hard-working environment.

- Resources are used well to support pupils' learning. For example, in mathematics, a range of equipment is used to help pupils to calculate accurately and to understand mathematical concepts. A variety of useful information is displayed on classroom walls to help pupils with aspects of their learning. Pupils refer to these displays frequently. These measures help pupils to become more independent learners.
- The teaching of mathematics is much improved. Leaders have ensured that teachers focus more on pupils understanding what is taught rather than simply teaching them to replicate a process. This has worked well, and pupils are now much more proficient in using reasoning to solve problems accurately.
- The school's chosen method of assessment is well established. Leaders and teachers use the system to identify what pupils know and can do. They also use it to help them to identify gaps in pupils' understanding. This information is then used to help them to plan further learning, ensuring that pupils' needs are met well.
- Teaching staff focus well on developing pupils' literacy skills. Teachers take increasing advantage of the wide range of writing opportunities that are available across the curriculum. Teachers also use this cross-curricular approach to broaden and extend pupils' knowledge and use of a wide and varied vocabulary.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are provided for well. The SEN Coordinator works closely with teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that pupils' individual needs are recognised and addressed. Teaching assistants provide good-quality support for pupils in their classrooms and this helps pupils to achieve well.
- The most able pupils are not routinely challenged fully in their learning. They are sometimes given tasks to do that are too easy and do not encourage them to think deeply. When this is the case, some of the most able pupils become bored and lose focus on their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming. Pupils were keen to speak with inspectors about their work and their school. They enjoy their learning and spending time with their friends. Pupils are proud of their work and their school.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to equality. They know that people should not be judged on their appearance, beliefs or any of the characteristics protected by law. When discussing religion with the lead inspector, pupils were very clear that people should be free to believe what they want to believe because 'it's an opinion, not a fact'.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They have been taught about different types of bullying and the forms it can take, including cyber bullying. Pupils say that bullying does happen but it is sorted out by staff. Pupils know that they should always tell an adult if they are worried that they or someone else is being bullied.

- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of ways and in different situations, including when using the internet. For example, Year 6 pupils visit a safety centre where they learn about issues such as safety in the home and how to perform cardiac pulmonary resuscitation. Pupils take part in regular fire drills and understand how this helps to keep them safe.
- Staff have focused strongly on improving pupils' attitudes to learning and this is now paying dividends. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They support and encourage each other. The school's work in this area has had a very positive impact on improving pupils' resilience, their confidence and, in some cases, their self-esteem. Pupils are now prepared to 'have a go' at tasks. They are not frightened to get things wrong, as they know that making mistakes is an important part of learning.
- A very small proportion of parents expressed concerns about bullying. They said that bullying is frequent and is not dealt with effectively by school staff. These concerns were not supported by inspection evidence.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave very well throughout the school. They follow the rules in their classrooms and respond to teachers' instructions quickly. Pupils work well with each other, cooperating on the tasks they are given to do.
- Playtimes are fun and enjoyable times for pupils. They are given equipment to use in their games and staff make the most of the limited playground space that is available to benefit the pupils. As a result, pupils play well with each other and problems are rare.
- Pupils attend school well and there is little persistent absence. There is an improving attendance trend, and the current rate of attendance is above the national average. Effective measures are used to monitor attendance, and appropriate steps are taken to improve individual pupils' attendance when it is not good enough.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Results of the key stage 2 national tests have improved year on year over the last three years. The rate of improvement speeded up considerably this year, reflecting the improvements evident in the quality of teaching.
- In the 2018 national tests, the proportion of pupils that reached at least the expected standard was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion that reached the expected standard in all three subjects combined was also above the national average. The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher standards was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 have been consistently strong in recent years. Published data shows that pupils attain standards that are similar to the national average and often above. This has been maintained in 2018.
- Similarly, results of the Year 1 phonics screening check improved year on year from 2015 and were well above the national average in 2017. Although the proportion of

Year 1 pupils that reached the level of the check in 2018 was lower than in 2017, this does not represent a drop in standards.

- The work in pupils' exercise books shows clearly that outcomes are now good throughout the school. Pupils' work shows care and pride. Pupils' exercise books show that they are given plentiful opportunities to practise the skills that they are taught. As a result, the good progress that pupils make is clearly evident.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points, because the quality of provision is good. For example, the school's 'nurture' provision caters very well for individual pupils' social and emotional needs. This good-quality work enables pupils to become more effective learners and, thus, to make better progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils also make good progress from their individual starting points. Some disadvantaged pupils also benefit from the school's 'nurture' provision. Staff are very effective at identifying and helping pupils to overcome any barriers to learning.
- Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects. They know and remember a wide range of information about subjects such as The Vikings and Rio de Janeiro. Pupils are increasingly given opportunities to write at length about the topics that they learn about.
- The school was slow to respond to the raised expectations of the new national curriculum when it was introduced in 2015. As a result, outcomes of the key stage 2 national tests were far too low in 2016 and, although improved, remained low in 2017.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leadership of the early years is very strong and highly ambitious. As a result, the early years provision is now a strength of the school. Leaders have a very thorough understanding of the provision's strengths as well as the areas that could still be improved. Leaders are able to show clearly the changes that have been made and how early years has improved as a result of them.
- Most children join the early years provision with knowledge and skills that are typical of their age. Outcomes for children in the early years have improved notably over the last three years. In 2015, the proportion of children that reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was similar to the national average. By 2018, the proportion had risen to be well above the most recent national average.
- The purpose-built early years accommodation provides an excellent environment for young children. The three large, open-plan classrooms are spacious, light and welcoming. They are complemented by three distinct outdoor areas, providing space both for more boisterous and for more sedate activities in the fresh air.
- Staff plan learning activities for children particularly well. A wide range of activities are provided for children to select from. Each of these activities has a clear purpose, which is explained fully to children before they choose what they are going to do. Staff follow children's interests and needs when planning the activities that will be offered.
- The various areas of the early years provision are used equally during times when children choose their own learning, because activities are well chosen and appealing. Staff have put sensible measures in place to ensure that children do not become 'stuck'

in particular areas. Children are given a timer to show them how long they can use computer equipment for. Staff also use timers to help children to learn to share the ever-popular bikes and scooters.

- Staff know the children very well. They continually assess children's progress and use this information very well to plan further learning. Staff's excellent knowledge about children enables them to question, encourage and direct children in just the right way to move their learning on. For example, during the inspection, children worked together to make their own replicas of the Eiffel Tower. A member of staff asked appropriate questions, and encouraged the right children to work together, in order for them to be successful.
- Staff use an online assessment program to record their observations of children's progress. This has been shared extremely well with parents, most of whom access the program regularly. Parents told inspectors that they are very happy with the early years provision and that they feel well informed about their children's progress.
- Children behave extremely well in the early years. Clear rules and routines have been established. This helps children to know what is expected of them and when. Staff are unerringly polite and respectful in their interactions with children and with each other. This provides a strong model that children follow closely.
- Safety is a strong feature of the early years provision. Staff think carefully about how best to supervise children, both indoors and outdoors. They look for opportunities for children to learn to manage risks safely. For example, children in the Reception Year used upturned crates carefully and sensibly as an extension to their stage when performing a song and dance routine outside.

School details

Unique reference number	117410
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10041796

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	372
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dwane Charalambous
Headteacher	Hazel Wing
Telephone number	01920 462653
Website	www.stcatherines.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@stcatherines.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets current floor standards. These are the minimum standards, set by the government, for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2015, 2016 and 2017.
- The school has expanded since the previous inspection and there are now two classes in each year group from Reception to Year 6. There are now an additional 100 pupils on the school's roll.
- The major building work that was in progress at the time of the previous inspection has been completed. The school now has purpose-built accommodation for upper key stage 2 and for the early years.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed parts of 18 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' exercise books. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work. Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documents, including assessment information.
- Inspectors checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- Meetings were held with leaders, governors, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection and with parents as they brought their children to school. Inspectors took into account 93 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 93 free-text comments that were received. Inspectors also noted a telephone call from a parent, received via Ofsted's call centre.
- Inspectors considered the 11 responses to the staff survey and the two online complaints that were received. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

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