

St Thomas A Becket Catholic Infant School

Tutts Barn Lane, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 8XT

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Progress is uneven across the school. Children's achievement in the Reception Year is not built upon rapidly enough when they start in Key Stage 1.
- Teaching is not consistently good across the school. On occasion, expectations for pupils' achievement are not high enough. Pupils are not always clear about what or how they are learning.
- Not all teachers successfully implement the agreed whole-school approaches to teaching and learning. As a result, pupils do not always learn as well as they could.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- Senior leaders, including governors, do not hold teachers to account effectively enough for pupils' progress.
- Leaders and managers do not have high enough expectations for the pace of improvement where weaknesses have been identified.

The school has the following strengths

- The Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They have positive attitudes to learning, and feel safe and secure in school because are very well cared for.
- Pupils are well prepared to move into Key Stage 2 as, by the end of Year 2, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average.
- The school's beliefs and its values promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development very well and underpin all that the school does.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and very happy with what the school offers their children.
- The school is a happy, caring place for pupils to learn.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons, several of them jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work, looked at their books and listened to some pupils read. They observed pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and staff with key leadership responsibilities. Discussions were held with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including: the school’s own check on its performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils’ progress; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to some parents at the start of the day. Inspectors also looked at 17 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Sharp

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Many other ethnic groups are represented in smaller numbers.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to looked-after children.
- The school federated with the junior school on the same site in 2010 and shares a governing body. Since September 2014, the headteacher of the junior school leads both schools.
- The junior school was inspected at the same time as the infant school.
- The school provides daily breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Provision is made for the Early Years Foundation Stage in three Reception classes, which children attend full time.
- There is a nursery on the site, which is managed by a private provider and therefore not included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by improving teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making certain that:
 - all staff consistently follow the school's approaches to teaching, have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and give clear instructions and explanations to pupils about their learning.
- Ensure that leaders and managers provide tight deadlines for improvement where weaknesses have been identified and hold teachers to account more rigorously for pupils' progress.
- Ensure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are identified at an early stage and the support they are given more effectively meets their needs in order to promote better progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leaders, including governors, have not yet been able to ensure that the quality of teaching is always good enough to enable pupils to make consistently good progress across the school.
- In a short space of time, the headteacher, supported by senior leaders, has ensured that effective checks on pupils' progress provide accurate information. As a result, they have correctly identified, and are aware of, weaknesses in progress and teaching.
- The management of teachers' performance is not linked to the national 'Teachers' Standards' and so does not always hold them fully accountable for pupils' progress. Actions to improve teaching in order to ensure more rapid progress across the school and for all groups are not rigorous enough. Expectations by leaders are high and support is provided where weaknesses are identified. However, deadlines are not tight enough to ensure the rapid improvement required.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors share the vision for the future of the school and a passion to do their best for the pupils. Teamwork is strong amongst all teachers, support staff and office staff, and morale is high. Parents and staff expressed great confidence in the leadership of the school and feel it is a happy, caring place for pupils to learn.
- Since September, there have been several changes in the leadership structure. For example, there is a greater focus on the leadership of teaching and learning. However, there has not been enough time to see the full impact of this work on improving teaching and raising achievement.
- Subject leaders in English and mathematics make a good contribution, and provide good support and advice to colleagues, as well as skills and expertise in their subjects.
- Subjects and topics covered by the school are broad and balanced, and meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. A good range and variety of trips and extra activities, including clubs, enrich and extend pupils' learning and experiences well.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, and particularly well through the school's values. These values underpin all of the school's work. Assemblies provide time for reflection and celebration, and the promotion of kindness and respect. The school's values promote pupils' understanding and tolerance of differences in faiths, cultures and backgrounds and, as a result, pupils learn without fear of any type of discrimination. The school is preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The school fosters good relationships between all its pupils, and between pupils and staff. It promotes equality of opportunity for all. However, leaders are aware that currently some pupils are not learning as well as they might.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all that the school offers their children. They are pleased that the headteacher is now leading the infant and the junior schools. Parents spoken to were very positive about a session they had attended to learn about the school's approach to teaching mathematics. They felt that this helps them help their children's learning. There is a very active parent group which organises many events to bring the community together and raises substantial funds for the school and charities.
- The additional funding the school receives for sport is used partly to employ a sports coach. This is effective in further developing pupils' and teachers' skills, and increasing what is on offer so that there is greater participation in sporting activity.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. It has enabled the school to provide extra teaching and support staff, and additional resources. It is also used to subsidise trips and clubs to help narrow the gap between this group and their peers. Pupils supported by this funding achieve better than similar pupils nationally.
- All safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements, and are well known and implemented by all staff.
- The local authority has provided 'light-touch' support to the school. It has worked with the school in various areas, including to check the accuracy of the Key Stage 1 results in 2013, providing phonics training and training for governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well and share the headteacher's passion to do their best for the pupils.
 - The governing body is supportive of the school and its leadership, especially at this time when there are many changes and developments.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching but do not hold leaders and staff to account rigorously enough for their performance and pupils' progress. They do not link this to teachers' pay and

promotion.

- Governors have undertaken a range of training and a review of their skills to increase their effectiveness in holding the school to account for its performance.
- They understand the school information, how the school performs compared to other schools nationally, and its strengths and areas for development.
- The governing body is aware of how additional funding is spent and the impact of spending for the benefit of pupils.
- Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met including those for safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and in the playground. They conduct themselves well around the school and are very welcoming, friendly and polite. School records show that good behaviour is typical over time.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They are keen to please their teachers and usually work hard. They are respectful of each other and adults. Pupils from all different backgrounds and cultures work and play together well.
- Pupils enjoy school, as is reflected in their attendance, which has improved and is now above average.
- All parents who responded to Parent View agree that behaviour is good.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because, on a few occasions where teaching does not fully engage pupils, they become distracted, start to chat and fidget, and lose their focus on learning.
- Pupils enjoy a variety of fundraising activities to support a range of charities. They are proud of the fact that, as one group said, 'We can help others who are not as lucky as us.'

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe, and all parents agree that the school keeps their children safe and looks after them well. Pupils say they are not aware of any bullying in school, but know that bullying can take different forms, such as name-calling and hitting.
- Good, trusting relationships mean that pupils feel confident to turn to adults in school if they have any problems. A group of children agreed that, 'The teachers are kind, they look after us and they help us be kind to each other.'
- Pupils are taught effectively how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils know about fire and road safety, and enjoyed a visit from the police. They said afterwards that they knew the police would help them if they were in trouble. They know they need to be careful when using the internet to keep themselves safe.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a good start and end of the day for those who attend. Pupils who attend behave well and are kept safe.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The school's checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' work show that some teaching is good or better but inconsistencies remain across the school. Inspectors agree.
- The school's agreed policy for teaching is not consistently or successfully implemented in all classes. Consequently, some pupils do not acquire skills and knowledge as rapidly as they might or make the progress of which they are capable.
- Sometimes, pupils lose concentration because they have not been given clear enough instructions about what to do and so are not too sure about what they should be learning. This also slows their progress.
- On occasion, teaching hinders the progress pupils make. For example, inaccurate use of mathematical vocabulary confuses pupils so they do not always make rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils achieve well in Year 2 because good teaching helps pupils to catch up in their learning. As a result, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 is above average.
- There are some good examples of a range of marking and feedback, including verbal feedback that gives pupils clear pointers for how to improve their work, for example when teachers use 'two stars and a wish' to indicate successes and what could be improved, or different-coloured writing to indicate the same. However, this is not consistent across the school. Sometimes, teachers do not make sure that pupils

respond to their suggestions, and so mistakes are repeated.

- Teaching assistants help pupils when they work with them in class, in small groups or individually, and often make a positive contribution to their learning.
- Relationships are warm and respectful, and staff are good role models in fostering a calm, caring school.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils do not make consistently good progress throughout their time in school. Pupils start in Year 1 with attainment that is broadly average. Their achievement is not built on rapidly enough in Year 1 and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- In Year 2, good teaching means that pupils make more rapid progress and so they catch up with their learning to achieve well by the end of Key Stage 1.
- In 2013, at the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics was below average. The proportion reaching the higher Level 3 in reading and writing, however, was above average.
- School records show that the levels pupils reached in all subjects improved in 2014. Attainment in reading, however, did not improve at the same rate as writing and mathematics.
- In 2013, the proportion of pupils reaching the required level in the Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters make) check was below average. In 2014, the proportion was above average as the school identified weaknesses and took effective action to remedy this. For example, many pupils were trying to make sense of the 'nonsense' words rather than read them phonetically and expectations for the pace of pupils' learning were too low. Currently, in some classes, phonics teaching does not always fully engage pupils. Their responses are not always picked up on in order to correct any misconceptions hindering their progress.
- Reading for enjoyment is promoted well across the school and parents are encouraged to read with their children on a regular basis. Resources are carefully chosen to engage and motivate all pupils, and boys in particular. This is helping to narrow the gap as girls do much better than boys in reading and writing. By Year 2, pupils are able to read with confidence and express opinions about favourite authors.
- Higher expectations and effective extra support for the most-able pupils means that the proportion of pupils working at the higher Level 3 at the end of Year 2 is greater than might be expected. It increased from 2013 to 2014, most notably in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not always make the progress they should. Their needs are not always identified early enough and the extra support they receive does not always meet their needs effectively to promote their progress adequately.
- In 2013, disadvantaged pupils did better in reading, writing and mathematics than similar pupils nationally. They did not do quite as well as their classmates in reading and writing but did equally well in mathematics. As with other pupils, achievement improved in 2014 because they made more rapid progress. However, the progress of the small number of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is inconsistent.

The early years provision

is good

- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Strong relationships and effective communication with parents ensure that children's start to school is smooth and effective and staff get to know the children well.
- As a result, children settle quickly and happily into the routines of the day and enjoy their learning.
- Children start in the Reception classes with skills and knowledge that are typically below the levels expected for their age. They catch up quickly and, in 2014, the proportion that reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was above that found nationally. This prepares them well to continue their learning in Year 1.
- The proportion that reached a good level of development improved considerably in 2014 from the previous year. This is because of generally good teaching and interesting, motivating activities indoors and outside.
- Adults communicate well with the children and ask them questions to determine and extend their knowledge and understanding. Staff carefully check the progress of individuals to help plan the next steps in learning.

- The quality of teaching is good. There are, however, some inconsistencies in what is on offer and the quality of teaching across the three classes, which is why it is not outstanding.
- Children are interested in their activities and most were happy to talk to inspectors. They mostly co-operated well with each other in their imaginative play.
- Behaviour is good. Children are well cared for and kept safe. All the safeguarding and welfare requirements are met.

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	114577
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	443768

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John McManus
Headteacher	Rachel Turner
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 July 2011
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