

St Catherine's Catholic Primary School

Drovers Lane, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 9EL

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Happy pupils enjoy learning. They are cared for exceptionally well.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve particularly well in mathematics.
- Teaching is always good and some is outstanding. Classrooms buzz with excitement because teachers make learning fun.
- Pupils are courteous, helpful to each other and behave well. In lessons, behaviour is often excellent. Pupils feel very safe in school.
- The headteacher gives strong leadership. She is tireless in wanting the very best for every pupil. Committed staff respond enthusiastically to this clear lead. Every teacher leads an area of the school's work and does it well. The governing body does its job with dedication.
- Things requiring improvement at the last inspection have been tackled firmly. Pupils are making more progress and teaching is better. Methods for checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are good.
- Parents say their children are happy and well taught.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is yet outstanding. In the teaching of writing, work is not always set at the correct level. Higher ability pupils could be doing better in writing.
- Attendance is below average and particularly low for some groups of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes and saw seven lessons. This included the headteacher conducting two joint observations with the inspector. The inspector also saw groups of pupils learning about letters and sounds (phonics).
- The inspector looked at the work in pupils' books to get a view of current achievement and progress over time. He spoke to groups of pupils to get their view of, amongst other things, how teaching helps them to learn, how safe they feel and what they think about behaviour in the school.
- The inspector took account of 17 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Meetings were held with six members of the governing body, teaching and classroom support staff and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, records of the quality of teaching, the improvement plan, provisional results in 2012 of standardised assessment tasks and the school's tracking of pupils' progress.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and checked the school's records of reading progress.

Inspection team

David Law, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A minority are from Eastern Europe and speak English as an additional language. About one tenth of pupils are from Gypsy/Roma or Traveller backgrounds.
- Staff have identified a larger than average proportion of pupils who are supported through school action because they have a disability or special educational needs.
- An average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs or are supported at school action plus.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is smaller than average. The pupil premium is extra funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority or are children of families in the services.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so more is outstanding and thereby accelerate pupils' progress in writing by:
 - making sure that pupils' work in writing is always set at the right level
 - helping pupils of higher ability to achieve more in their writing.
- Improve attendance by
 - targeting action at pupils and families where absence is most persistent
 - tracking the effect of absence on pupils' achievement and sharing this with parents.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children join the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding below those typical for their age. They make good progress because they settle well and enjoy learning. They were thrilled to come to school in their pyjamas when learning about light and dark and made sure to brush their teeth after having 'bedtime' milk and cookies.
- Good progress continues throughout Years 1 and 2 and most pupils reach average standards of attainment by the end of Year 2. Since the last inspection, achievement in reading and mathematics has improved strongly. Achievement in writing has also improved but lags behind other subjects as too few pupils reach standards above those expected for their age. At Key Stage 1, pupils are keen to learn about numbers and shapes and by the end of Year 2, more reach the higher level in mathematics than is seen nationally. In one lesson, they made brisk progress when learning about halves and quarters and some even puzzled out how to halve 'the tricky triangle'.
- Pupils' early reading skills develop well and they show a good grasp of the sounds letters make (phonics). Many read with enthusiasm and quickly come to recognise key words.
- Pupils at Key Stage 2 make good progress and by the end of Year 6, overall standards of attainment are average in English and above average in mathematics. Some make excellent progress, for example those speaking English as an additional language.
- For all pupils, progress is particularly strong in mathematics. In one outstanding lesson, Year 5 and 6 pupils made rapid progress when solving complex problems using fractions. In the 2012 end of key stage tests, many pupils reached standards above those expected for their age.
- By the end of Year 6, most pupils read widely and avidly. Girls frequently make excellent progress. Pupils needing extra support to catch up with their reading make good progress because they are well taught. Progress in writing is good but not as strong as either mathematics or reading and, although most reach the expected level, too few do better than this.
- Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils make good progress although where there is prolonged absence they fall behind. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and some make outstanding progress because staff make sure that work is at the right level. Pupil premium funding is used wisely to provide extra teaching so pupils supported in this way make just as good progress as other pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching throughout the school means pupils make consistently good progress. Some teaching is outstanding and all classrooms are alive with the sound of eager pupils busily learning.
- Lessons are well organised and the pace of learning is brisk. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support pupils and contribute much to their good progress. Teachers make lessons interesting with many practical activities so pupils display high levels of engagement.
- Teachers explain things clearly and use questions well to test pupils' understanding. In one outstanding mathematics lesson with the oldest pupils, the teacher's questions really 'stretched' the more able. They rose to the challenge by explaining clearly how they had reached their conclusions and some were beginning to get the idea of a mathematical equation.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge and this is particularly evident in the teaching of mathematics, reading and science. Young scientists at Key Stage 1 were fascinated when using torches in the dark tent and the teacher skilfully got them to explain their ideas.
- Early reading skills are taught well and more pupils are now reaching the higher level by the end of Year 2. 'Letters and sounds' sessions work well, for example pupils loved it when shown how to combine sounds using the 'phonics wellies'. Teachers require older pupils to complete reading

journals and these are checked carefully to see how well they are doing.

- Tasks in writing are not always pitched at the right level to get the best out of all pupils but in particular the more able. Consequently, progress is not as strong as in other subjects with too few reaching higher levels. However, teachers make sure pupils use their writing skills properly in subjects other than English, for example when writing about Ancient Egypt.
- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Pupils say teachers make lessons fun and that marking helps them to improve their work. They know the targets teachers have agreed with them and are skilful in checking their own work because teachers expect this of them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The consistently good behaviour of pupils helps lessons to proceed smoothly in the friendly atmosphere of this orderly school. In many lessons, behaviour is excellent as pupils work together and try their very best. Pupils behave well at break times and take their responsibilities as playground leaders very seriously when they look after the play equipment and befriend others.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and parents agree. They show a good understanding of how to keep safe, for example when riding bikes or using the internet. Pupils were emphatic in saying the school looks after them exceptionally well.
- School records show that bullying is rare. Pupils also say it is infrequent and when it happens they are confident that adults will soon sort it out. Pupils are unanimous in saying that everyone gets on well together and nobody is treated badly because they are different. They have a good understanding of different forms of bullying because they have been taught about this in class.
- The school works hard to improve attendance and there is some evidence of impact but absence remains persistent for some pupils. It is well below average for Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils and for those of Eastern European origin who take extended holidays to visit family abroad. For other pupils, attendance is broadly average. There are plans to link achievement information with that on attendance so the adverse affect of absence on learning can be made clear to parents, but this is not currently in place.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher who has forged staff into a highly motivated team. Senior leaders are unfaltering in trying to raise pupils' achievement through improving teaching.
- Leaders carry out rigorous checks on the quality of the teaching. Governors are beginning to acquire a role in this work but there is more they could do. Targets are set for teachers and all staff are clear about what should improve. Training is relevant and staff are keen to undertake it.
- All teachers enthusiastically lead an aspect of the school's work and do this with drive and skill. Training to improve leadership skills has resulted in all leaders doing the job well.
- School leaders make sure that subjects and teaching are planned to capture pupils' imagination. Consequently, pupils are well motivated and give of their best. Many exciting activities augment learning in the classroom such as gardening, visits to museums and outdoor adventure activities.
- Leaders and governors make good use of pupil premium funding, for example, to provide extra support from teaching assistants to help pupils to catch up. As a result, these pupils are achieving as well as others in the school. The school budget is managed efficiently so classroom equipment is of good quality. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils learnt much about electricity using excellent science resources and computers to do research.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well provided for because leaders and governors have forged strong links with the community and the church. All groups of pupils in

the school learn and play well together.

- Leaders and governors have good support from the local authority and are full of praise for it. This has helped to establish strong links with local schools where teachers can share ideas about their work.
- Leaders and governors constantly seek to do even better. Consequently, since the last inspection teaching and achievement have improved. There is a strong capacity to improve further because nobody in the school is satisfied with anything less than the best.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed because school leaders provide them with good information about teaching and pupils' progress. Yet they also challenge this when they need to and make sure they get into school to find out for themselves. However, there is scope for governors to increase their role in finding out more about teaching quality. The governing body makes sure that safeguarding requirements are met. Governors are thorough in appraising the work of the headteacher and in setting targets for improvement. They support the headteacher well in managing the performance of other staff and in making decisions about pay.

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	112305
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	401257

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	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Denis Smith
Headteacher	Angela Hill
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2010
Telephone number	01768 864612
Email address	admin@st-catherines.cumbria.sch.uk

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