

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

Beaconsfield Road, Sudbury, CO10 1JP

Inspection dates 6–7 June 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- The significant changes in staffing the school has experienced in recent years have meant that standards in English and mathematics are uneven and lower than they have been in the past.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length, which restricts their ability to develop their literacy skills to the full.
- Not enough teaching is good. Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The teaching of early literacy skills for the youngest pupils is not always as well-planned as it needs to be.
- Teachers do not always plan their lessons to ensure that pupils build on what they already know, which limits progress, especially in the case of more-able pupils.
- The way that mathematics is taught does not make sure that pupils have enough practice in applying their skills in addition and subtraction to solving problems.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the appointment of the executive headteacher, head of school and new governing body, the decline in pupils' progress and attainment has been halted. The school is back on track and is improving steadily.
- Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are good. Pupils feel safe and their behaviour is often outstanding, particularly in Year 5.
- The partnership between St Edmund's and St Joseph's is benefitting pupils' learning and the professional development of staff, resulting in some improvements in teaching.
- Attendance is improving as a result of the firm action taken by the leadership team.
- Parents and pupils are very pleased with recent improvements in the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, as well as groups of pupils or individuals working with learning support assistants.
- The inspector looked closely at pupils' work in all year groups and heard some pupils from Years 1, 2 and 5 read.
- The inspector held meetings with staff, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, a group of parents, and groups of pupils from the school council and Year 2. She spoke informally with many pupils during lessons and at break times.
- A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked carefully at safeguarding documentation, information about pupils' progress, self-evaluation documents and development plans.
- The views of the 41 parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Cheryl Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average school. It is making the change from a first school to an all-through primary school. The change will be complete when the school has its first Year 6 group in September 2013.
- For the past four years, there have been more girls than boys in the school. In some year groups, there are considerably more girls than boys.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This extra funding is for looked-after children, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- In the past three years, the school has been through considerable changes, including a building project. During this time, a higher than average number of pupils left the school.
- With the exception of one part-time teacher, all teachers are new to the school since the last inspection. Three teachers are newly qualified and another is at the early stage of their teaching career.
- The executive headteacher was asked to take on the role of headteacher by the local authority and became the executive headteacher in April 2011. The school is in a formal partnership with St Edmund's Roman Catholic School. The schools have separate governing bodies and separate budgets. The executive headteacher spends two days at St Joseph's each week. The day-to-day running of the school is undertaken by the head of school, who was appointed in September 2011.
- A new governing body was appointed in December 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to a consistently good level by making sure that all teachers:
 - set high expectations for pupils to work at a good rate
 - improve their marking by giving pupils a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work further and giving them time to do this
 - always provide all pupils, especially the more able and those pupils who have special educational needs, with work that will make them think hard and which helps them to build on what they already know.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress and raise standards across the school, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
 - improving the teaching of early literacy skills for the youngest children
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length across the school
 - providing more opportunities in mathematics for pupils to practise problem solving.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Until recently, not enough pupils have made good progress over time, especially more-able pupils. This is despite children starting school with attainment that is broadly typical for their age-group and evident strengths in their positive attitudes to learning and in their language and communication skills.
- Pupils have had a great deal of disruption to their learning in the recent past. For example, in some year groups, pupils had at least four different teachers in one school year. The result of this disruption is that pupils still have gaps in their learning which are limiting their progress.
- Standards in Year 2 have generally been judged by the school to be above average in the past but, following a review of teachers' assessment practice, standards dipped to average levels in 2012, and were below average in writing.
- Results in the 2012 national phonics check were below average. The main reason for this is that phonics had not been taught regularly and systematically. The school's recent assessment data indicates that the present Year 1 pupils are expected to do much better.
- Under the leadership of the executive headteacher, achievement is improving. In Year 2, provisional results for 2013 are above average in reading and broadly average in writing and mathematics. However, by the time pupils leave Year 5, they perform well only in reading. In the past, pupils have not achieved well enough in either English or mathematics. In response to more good teaching, they are now making up for lost learning.
- Across the school, standards of reading are better than in writing. Although standards in writing are improving, pupils' knowledge of phonics (the links between sounds and letters) has, until recently, been weak. The school has worked in close partnership with parents to ensure learning in school is reinforced at home, and this is helping to accelerate progress.
- In writing, pupils have creative ideas but are not given enough time in lessons to develop these to the full. Consequently, older pupils' writing is not as consistently good as it should be.
- Attainment in the various aspects of mathematics remains inconsistent. For example, pupils have a good understanding of calculation but are less confident when required to solve problems because they do not have enough opportunities to practise this skill. An exception is in Year 5, where carefully structured teaching is helping pupils make good progress in this aspect of mathematics.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs requires improvement. When these pupils are taught in small groups by the special educational needs coordinator or teaching assistants, they usually make good progress because the activities are closely matched to what the pupils need to learn. In class sessions, however, their learning requires improvement because work is not consistently planned at the right level for them.
- There are not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and therefore eligible for the pupil premium to comment on their attainment and progress without identifying them.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- There are differences in the quality of teaching across the school and teaching does not enable all pupils to make consistently good progress.
- Although some teaching is outstanding and there is clear evidence that the leaders are steadily improving practice, expectations are not always high enough in some classes to ensure tasks set are appropriately demanding and require pupils to think hard. This is particularly the case for more-able pupils and, on occasions, for the less-able pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Gaps in pupils' learning are not always picked up soon enough. Consequently, teachers' lesson planning is not always carefully based on what pupils have already learned and what they need to learn next.
- The teaching of early literacy skills for the Reception group requires improvement. Not enough attention is paid to those children who are making slower progress than their peers. Although the teaching of phonics was introduced by the executive headteacher when she took over the school, it is only in the last year that staffing has been stable and teaching systematic. On occasions, phonics teaching still lacks the pace to ensure that children progress at a good rate.
- Teachers mark their pupils' work regularly but there is variation in the usefulness of the comments made to help pupils know how to improve. Pupils are not always told precisely what they have to improve or how to set about doing this. They are not routinely given time to respond to teachers' marking.
- In the best teaching, lessons are well planned and structured, and no time is wasted. Teachers quickly identify what pupils need to do better, have high expectations of what they can achieve and ensure that lessons move at a good pace.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- All staff, and parents and carers have positive views about behaviour in school. Pupils say that the school is 'way better now and much friendlier'. They respond very well to the high expectations set for them to be kind, courteous and respectful.
- All parents and carers agree that their children enjoy school and feel safe. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have a clear understanding of what constitutes various forms of bullying, including through mobile phones and emails. Older pupils take a responsible approach to keeping themselves safe, and prevent or deal with any such bullying.
- Pupils offer thoughtful responses when given the opportunity to reflect on spiritual or moral issues in lessons or assemblies. For example, in an assembly during the inspection, pupils gave considerable and mature thought to how working together for a common purpose benefits all.
- Pupils are proud of their school community and enjoy taking on responsibilities within it.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning. Where teaching is good or better, pupils apply themselves wholeheartedly to their task and work extremely hard. Where teaching requires improvement, pupils remain positive about learning but do not always work at a good rate.

- In the past three years, attendance has been below average, with a much higher than average proportion of pupils who were persistently absent. This year, very much in response to the firm line taken by the executive headteacher and head of school, attendance has improved to an average level. However, there remain a small number of parents who do not ensure their children attend regularly and who take holidays during term time.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong and decisive leadership by the executive headteacher, the head of school and governors has provided much needed stability. They share a strong commitment to making sure that all groups of pupils have an equal chance to do well and that there is no discrimination.
- The executive headteacher, head of school and the governing body have dealt sensitively and most successfully with parental dissatisfaction caused by the significant turbulence in staffing in the recent past. Parents who spoke with the inspector said, 'It's a different school now.' Almost all the parents and carers who recorded their views on Parent View would now recommend the school to others.
- The executive headteacher has established very good systems for checking on the work of the school. All leaders have a very clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve pupils' progress further and all demonstrate a resolute determination to drive forward the improvements needed.
- Together with the head of school, the executive headteacher is managing the improvements in teaching very well. There are high expectations for teachers to fulfil their roles and high-quality support from the head of school, the partner school and from the local authority to help teachers to improve their practice.
- Teachers at the start of their career are supported very well. They have clear guidelines to follow. For example, the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work is improving and their expectations for the quality of presentation in pupils' work are increasingly high. Parents and carers appreciate the accessibility of teachers and the weekly emails to let them know the work their children will be doing.
- The special educational needs coordinator is having a good impact on making sure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are identified and that special provision is made for them.
- A good start has been made to ensure a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics, and, although more work needs to be done, this is having an increasingly positive impact across the school.
- The partnership between the two schools has a good impact on many aspects of the school's work. Teachers have opportunities to observe good practice and have received coaching from more experienced teachers. Pupils have opportunities to undertake joint visits to places such as the Science Museum and go on residential trips.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school during the periods of considerable change. The training and advice from consultants have been very beneficial.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are thorough in making sure that they perform their legal duties, including the safe recruiting and vetting of staff and balancing the school budget. They know the school well and make good use of their individual professional expertise in supporting it and asking searching questions. They are not afraid to take tough decisions about staffing and have supported the school leaders robustly through the recent difficult period. They check on spending decisions carefully, including the use and impact of pupil premium funding. They have taken resolute steps to make sure that the school's budget is back in a good state. Governors visit frequently and have a good understanding of what performance information tells them about pupils' progress and how it compares with schools nationally. They are well aware of the quality of teaching and the strategies used for helping teachers to make further improvement, as well as how the school rewards good teaching and deals with any underperformance.

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	124763
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	412905

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	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Millyard
Headteacher	Maria Kemble (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2009
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