

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Park Lane, Cheshunt, EN7 6LR

Inspection dates 12–13 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have not secured consistently good teaching or achievement over time.
- Standards are not high enough in mathematics; the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Teaching requires improvement because teachers do not always make it clear to pupils specifically what they want them to learn.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of marking and how teachers follow up pupils' responses to their guidance.
- The early years requires improvement because Reception children do not develop their number skills enough to be ready for Year 1.
- Leaders and managers do not use data precisely enough to gain a clear overview of how different year groups are performing.
- Leaders have not done enough to address the concerns of a minority of parents who have negative perceptions about the school's work.
- Governors have not checked carefully enough the impact of the school's actions in bringing about improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching and pupils' progress are improving.
- Provision in the Nursery is good.
- Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They feel safe in school.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, and those who are supported by the pupil premium, achieve well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 24 lessons, or parts of lessons, including 13 observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. The lead inspector also attended an assembly.
- Members of the inspection team heard pupils read and, with senior leaders, looked closely at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports and safeguarding records. They considered evidence of the school's partnership work and the information provided for families.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and other staff. Inspectors talked to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and to a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 62 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They also spoke informally to parents in the playground and received letters, emails and a telephone call from parents.
- The inspectors considered 22 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kirsteen Holland

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is similar in size to the average-sized primary school. There is one class in each year group.
- Early years provision is part time in the Nursery and full time in the Reception class.
- Two in five pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, which is above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after children) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There have been numerous changes to teaching staff in the past two years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move teaching to good by:
 - sharing widely the good practice already evident in the school
 - making sure that teachers are clear about what they specifically want pupils to learn
 - ensuring teachers' marking clearly shows pupils how to improve their work
 - giving pupils enough time to act upon teachers' guidance in their books and checking their responses are having a positive impact on their learning.
- Raise standards in mathematics by making sure that:
 - the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged to reach the higher levels of attainment
 - expectations of what children can achieve in Reception in developing number skills are high enough to prepare them well for Year 1
 - pupils increase their mathematical understanding through explaining their thinking when solving problems.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - using data to gain a clear overview of how different year groups are performing
 - ensuring governors check carefully the impact of the school's actions to bring about improvement
 - working with those parents who are dissatisfied to address their concerns and to improve their perceptions of the school's work.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have been unable to ensure consistently good teaching over time. There has been underachievement in the past, which has had an adverse impact on the current attainment of the older pupils. Leaders are not secure in their knowledge of how year groups are performing as opposed to individual pupils. Governors have not been active enough in finding out for themselves how well the school is doing, and in responding to the negative perceptions some parents have about the school.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and senior leaders have set high expectations for teaching and pupils' achievement. They have taken difficult decisions to ensure that the school's motto, 'Teaching is good or outstanding day in day out' becomes closer to reality. As a consequence, there have been numerous changes to teaching staff.
- Some successful appointments have resulted in teaching improving rapidly this year, although it is too soon to see the impact in higher national test results. Effective leadership of teaching and learning means that teaching staff are clear about the strengths in their work and how they can improve further.
- Some subject and other leaders are relatively new to post, but have an accurate understanding of their areas of responsibility. They are taking an increasing role in checking the quality of teaching and giving helpful feedback to staff. They have not had the experience to be fully effective in their roles yet.
- All leaders have a good understanding about how individual pupils are getting on. Their appreciation of the wider picture concerning the performance of whole year groups is not so well established. This makes it harder for them to identify trends and to hold some teachers fully to account for what their whole class is doing.
- The range of subjects taught meets pupils' needs. The many visits to places of interest, visitors to the school and clubs, enhance learning. All classes have studied British values, including the strengths of democracy and respect for others. The school also promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well through its varied activities and assemblies. Pupils learn about faiths other than their own. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The pupil premium is spent effectively on one-to-one tuition and small-group work. This enables eligible pupils to achieve well and close gaps in attainment with their classmates. The school ensures that all pupils are treated equally and that discrimination is not tolerated. It fosters good relations with the church and parish, other schools and outside agencies such as social services.
- Parents have mixed views about the school. While the majority is happy with the school's work, and many had positive things to say, a minority has negative perceptions about different aspects of the school's performance and how leaders deal with their concerns. Inspectors found that more could be done by the school and governors to work with parents to address their concerns and tackle any negative perceptions they have.
- The school meets all safeguarding requirements and ensures these are effective in keeping pupils safe. It carries out all necessary checks on new members of staff.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is spent effectively on coaching, girls' football, participation in more sports tournaments and training for staff. This has had a beneficial impact in increasing the numbers of pupils taking part in sports and built the confidence of staff in teaching it.
- The local authority has supported the school well in the early years, and with writing and mathematics.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governance of the school requires improvement. While governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school, they sometimes rely too much on the information they are given. They are not active enough in conducting their own checks on the impact of the school's actions to bring about improvement. Governors are aware of the school's performance data and what the quality of teaching is like. They know about how the school manages teachers' performance, rewards good teaching and tackles underperformance. While there is a degree of challenge, they are not in a position to hold leaders fully to account for the school's work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very polite and considerate. They care for each other. They have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to take part in lessons. Pupils say, 'Teachers push you to do your best but don't nag.'
- Pupils' behaviour in the playground and around the school is good. They socialise well, for example in the dining hall.
- Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, for example when Year 6 pupils help the younger children as 'Reception buddies'. The newly formed school council was democratically elected after hustings and is having a positive impact on improving aspects of school life. House captains have a budget to spend on their houses, and consult with pupils about what would be most beneficial for them to purchase.
- A significant minority of parents, through Parent View and in communication with inspectors, shared negative perceptions about pupils' behaviour. Inspectors found that the vast majority of pupils consistently behave well. A few individuals have particular difficulties, but the school manages their behaviour well and provides appropriate support.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that bullying is not an issue and that they feel safe at school. This is a view not shared by all parents. However, records are kept appropriately and show that any incidents have been dealt with in line with the school's procedures.
- Pupils are aware of different kinds of bullying such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They have a good understanding of e-safety. Pupils know how to keep safe in a variety of different situations relating to roads, fire and water. They take part in 'crucial crew' training with the emergency services, which informs them what to do in an emergency.
- Pupils are involved in assessing risks when they go on trips. Their attendance and punctuality have improved over time. Attendance is now in line with the national average.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Inadequate teaching in the past has left a legacy of underachievement, especially for the older pupils. While current teaching is much improved, there remains some unevenness that prevents it from being consistently good.
- At times, teachers are not clear enough about what they specifically want pupils to learn and so pupils do not achieve so well. The quality of marking in books varies. While there are examples of good marking, in some classes there is not enough guidance for pupils about how to improve their work. Pupils are not always given enough time to act upon the advice in their books.
- Where pupils have responded to teachers' suggestions or questions, teachers have not always checked that their actions were correct. For example, a pupil's 'correction' of a spelling mistake was also incorrect

and not picked up; the response to a mathematical challenge was incorrect and not addressed.

- Strengths in teaching include questioning that extends pupils' learning and promotes stimulating discussion. For example, as a result of the teacher's skilful questioning, pupils in Year 5 had a lively debate about the honesty of food labelling.
- Displays in classrooms give pupils useful and relevant prompts to aid their learning. The displays encourage pupils to persevere with their work. 'Check-it stations' provide additional mathematical resources and advice that pupils access by themselves if they get stuck with their work.
- The quality of work in books has improved this year, especially in Key Stage 2. This is because teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can produce. There is more extended writing across different subjects.
- Pupils develop an enthusiasm for reading and read widely. Younger pupils use phonics (the sounds that letters make) to sound out unfamiliar words. Older pupils can summarise the plot of a story and explain why they like particular books.
- In mathematics, sometimes the most able pupils are not given demanding enough work to do, or moved on quickly enough when it is clear that they have grasped a new concept. While pupils regularly attempt problems, they are not always expected to explain their thinking or make links across different aspects of mathematics. This means teachers miss opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement has not been consistently good over time. Weaker teaching in the past has caused a legacy of underachievement which has meant standards have not been as high as they should have been. In 2014, pupils in Year 6 reached standards that were broadly average in reading and writing and a little below average in mathematics. Too few pupils reached the higher levels of attainment.
- Children join the Nursery and Reception class with skills that are typical for their age. The school's data show that their language and behaviour are not as strong as other areas when they arrive. Children make good progress in the Nursery because the teaching staff know them well and plan activities that meet their needs. Provision sometimes requires improvement in Reception because expectations are not high enough, especially in early number skills.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the phonics check at the end of Year 1 was average. In the past, children did not make enough progress coming into Year 1 from Reception, and this meant they did not score as well as they should have done.
- By the end of Year 2 in 2014, standards were broadly average. Pupils made more progress in writing than in reading and mathematics because there has been a focus on increasing teachers' subject knowledge and this is having a positive impact on their understanding of how to teach writing well.
- The attainment of pupils in Year 6 in 2014 was better than it had been in 2013. However, because of weaker teaching in the past, these pupils did not achieve as well as they should have done. Even though they made good progress in their final year at school, their progress had not been as strong in the first three years of Key Stage 2. This was markedly so in mathematics.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 are also doing well this year, but again underachieved in earlier years and their attainment, while average, is not where it should be.
- Current performance information suggests that, with better teaching, progress is accelerating, and pupils in other year groups, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are getting closer to attaining at levels expected for their age.

- The needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are being clearly identified and more quickly than was sometimes the case in the past. This means that pupils are receiving the support they need sooner and this is speeding up their progress. As a result, the gap is closing between their attainment and that of their classmates and they are achieving well.
- Across the school, the small numbers of pupils supported by the pupil premium are achieving more quickly than other pupils. There were too few eligible pupils in Year 6 to comment on their attainment without identifying them. In general, the greater progress means gaps between eligible pupils and others in the school are closing. This is because they receive support that is targeted specifically to meet their needs and teachers keep a close eye on how well they are doing.
- The small numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well because they are given good support to help them master new vocabulary and access the learning in class.
- The most able pupils did not attain as well as they could have done in 2014 because of previous underachievement. This year, the stronger teaching, especially in Key Stage 2, means that more of them are on course to reach the higher levels of attainment. In some classes, however, the most able pupils are not always given sufficiently demanding work to do and this slows their progress. This is particularly the case in mathematics.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because at times in the Reception class expectations of children are not high enough, especially in developing their number skills. This slows their progress and means they are not always well prepared for Year 1.
- Children achieve well in the Nursery because the activities are exciting and well planned for children's needs. Adults promote children's language development well. For example, children dressed up as super-heroes and went on a 'mission' to find missing teddy bears. This quest generated much excited conversation between the adults and the children. Through their questions and prompts, the adults helped the children to express their ideas as they followed clues to lead them back to the teddy bears.
- Teaching staff manage children's behaviour well. Where children's behaviour falls short, prompt intervention by adults refocuses them on their tasks. This means that most of the time behaviour is good. Children are kept safe in the Nursery and Reception class.
- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders do not have a clear overview of children's progress as a whole year group. While they can see the impact of the provision on the progress of individuals, they are less secure about the effectiveness of their work as a whole.

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	117492
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	453653

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Franklin
Headteacher	Yvonne Devereux
Date of previous school inspection	28 February–1 March 2013
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