

Richard de Clare Community Primary School

Parsonage Street, Halstead, CO9 2JT

Inspection dates 17–18 June 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, leaders and managers have been effective in driving school improvement, raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching.
- The governing body has supported senior leaders well in this, and the role of governors has developed considerably since the last inspection.
- Most pupils currently in the school have made good progress, especially in the early years and at Key Stage 2. Pupils have filled past gaps in their learning which has led to an improvement in standards.
- Teaching is good, with particular strengths in the Reception classes and Year 6.
- In all year groups, teaching assistants make a major contribution to pupils' learning and the school has done a great deal to develop their role.
- The school provides well for children in the early years. They make good progress and are well prepared for moving up to Key Stage 1.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. Their positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to their progress and development.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It promotes British values effectively and prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils currently in Year 2 have made good progress across the key stage, standards remain below average in writing.
- On occasion, teachers do not give pupils tasks that are matched closely enough to the next steps in their learning.
- At times, teachers do not make clear what pupils need to do to succeed with a given task or what they need to consider when judging their own or others' work.
- While some marking is good, teachers are not always specific enough as to what pupils could do to improve and they do not always ensure that they respond fully to guidance.
- Teachers do not all insist that pupils are consistently neat in the way they present work or that they take enough care with their spelling.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 25 lessons. In addition, inspectors looked at pupils’ books, talked to them about their work and checked their progress over time to provide a balance of evidence on teaching and learning. An inspector listened to some pupils at Key Stage 1 read, looked at lunchtime and playtime arrangements, and talked with a group of pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and inclusion manager, the early years leader and with teachers who have responsibility for English and mathematics. Interviews took place with a group of governors and with two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspection team considered the 60 responses to the online survey, Parent View. They also took into account the 46 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documentation. This included: the school’s self-evaluation and development plan; records of pupils’ attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance; and systems for protecting and safeguarding pupils.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Amieli

Additional Inspector

Elizabeth Hackett

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is broadly average. This funding is for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is a little above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There has been a high turnover of teaching staff since the last inspection and only a minority of the teachers present at that time are still employed by the school.
- The school is currently taking part in the NAHT (National Association of Headteachers) Aspire programme.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, especially in writing at Key Stage 1, and build on existing strengths in teaching by making sure that all teachers consistently:
 - give pupils tasks that are matched effectively to the next steps in their learning
 - communicate clearly to pupils what they need to do to succeed with a given task and exactly what they need to consider when judging their own or others' work
 - make clear in marking what pupils need to do to improve their work and ensure that they respond to their guidance
 - convey high expectations about how pupils present their work and adopt a more rigorous approach to correcting their spelling.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders with key responsibilities have successfully established a number of essential systems that were not in place at the time of the last inspection. They have provided good leadership and been successful in improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement. The school is well placed to develop further, and a culture has been established in which teaching can flourish and pupils are expected to behave well.
- Senior leaders gather a substantial amount of data and analyse this exceptionally well to judge the school's effectiveness, pupils' achievement and to identify where improvement is needed. Joint assessment with teachers from other schools ensures that teachers' judgements about pupils' attainment and progress are accurate.
- Senior leaders hold half-termly meetings with teachers to check how well pupils are progressing and to make sure that they all have equal opportunities. They keep a close check to avoid any possible discrimination and promote positive relationships between pupils.
- Middle leaders with key responsibilities, such as the early years, English and mathematics leaders, make a good contribution to improving teaching and raising achievement. Leaders of subjects and other areas of the school's work are developing their roles through involvement in the NAHT Aspire programme, and say that this is providing a good opportunity for teachers to share their practice. The school has invested time in the training of teaching assistants to very good effect.
- The leadership of teaching is good and the school has rigorous systems for managing teachers' performance. The headteacher, with the support of the governing body, has taken firm action in tackling past underperformance. While this has contributed to a high turnover of staff, it has been a key factor in improving teaching and raising achievement. Support for newly appointed teachers is good, although the high staff turnover has led to some inconsistency of practice between classes.
- The school makes good use of its pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have spent the money to provide a wide range of support programmes. These include additional support for pupils in communication and language, literacy and numeracy, help for families with complex needs, and a strong focus on the emotional needs of pupils. This is having a good effect on the achievement of those eligible.
- The school makes effective use of its primary physical education and sport premium to increase pupils' physical skills and expand the experiences available to them. It has used its funding to employ a coach to develop pupils' skills in Years 1 to 3 and to increase staff expertise, and for table tennis coaching for older pupils. The funding has also enabled the school to increase the number of sports clubs available and to provide more opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sport.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and promotes pupils' academic achievement and personal development well. Special focus activities at Key Stage 2 build on the themes and topics pupils study at Key Stage 1, and pupils take part in a wide range of activities that enrich their learning. These include visits by authors, Olympians, a brass band, links with Africa and China, educational and residential trips.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It teaches pupils about British values and prepares them effectively for life in modern Britain. Respect for others' beliefs, democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance are typical assembly topics and feature prominently in displays around the school. While the school is predominantly White British, it prepares pupils for life in a multicultural society, for instance, with visiting speakers from a range of cultures and a performance by Maasai Warriors.
- Partnership with parents is good. The school establishes close working with parents when their children

start in the early years and there are good opportunities for them to become involved in their children's learning. For example, parents of pupils in Years 4 and 5 have attended an apps club to find out about the teaching of reading and mathematics, and the parents of young children come in and do a 'busy fingers' workshop with them four days a week.

- The school has effective systems for keeping pupils safe and its safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. It makes sure that staff are fully trained and works well with other agencies where there are any concerns. Leaders keep meticulous records in relation to safeguarding and child protection, and governors are appropriately involved in checking that health and safety procedures are followed.
- The school has made good use of the support provided by the local authority, particularly in developing its use of data and in governor training, and staff have visited other local schools to observe examples of best practice. The local authority has commissioned and is helping to fund the NAHT Aspire programme to develop the role of leaders with specific responsibilities, to improve teaching and raise standards.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective. The governing body made good use of the review of its work which followed the last inspection and governors have undertaken training to develop their role. As a result, they are now taking a much bigger part in the school's development and are ambitious for the future.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the school's work and is now much more effective in holding senior leaders to account. Governors have had training in how to interpret data so that they can check how well the school is doing, including the spending and impact of pupil premium funding. Governors are now linked to subjects and aspects of the school's work and conduct regular visits to check things for themselves.
- The governing body is well informed about the quality of teaching. They make sure that checks on staff performance are thorough. Governors make sure that the most effective teachers are recognised financially and they have supported the headteacher in tackling past underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' behaviour around the school, in assemblies and during break times is good and, in some cases, exemplary. Pupils are nearly always polite and respectful.
- Pupils are keen to learn and have positive attitudes to school and their teachers. They express gratitude for the support the school provides and appreciate the time teachers spend outside lessons, helping them to progress and providing them with clubs and special activities. Older pupils feel well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils nearly always concentrate and apply themselves well in lessons. They work cooperatively together and are eager to answer teachers' questions. The most-able pupils present their work neatly; other pupils tend to take less care and teachers do not always convey high enough expectations about presentation.
- The school's attendance rate is broadly average and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils like coming to school because they enjoy their lessons and the facilities available. The vast majority, therefore, attend regularly.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school because they know that the school site is safe and they trust their teachers and other adults to care for them. Parents believe that the school looks after their children well and keeps them safe. The school places a lot of emphasis on pupils' emotional well-being and listens carefully to their views.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and have had specific advice on avoiding risks when they are using the internet or mobile phones. The school has found creative ways of involving parents also in its e-safety training.

- Pupils say that bullying is not an issue in the school and they are clear about what constitutes bullying and how it should always be reported to an adult. Records confirm that there is only a small amount of bullying and indicate that it is handled effectively.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The school's own records of teaching, progress data and inspection findings indicate that teaching is good. Inspection findings show that teachers have established very positive relationships with their pupils, and they make it clear that they expect them to behave well and work hard. As a result, the impact of teaching on learning and achievement in reading and mathematics is good. The school is focused on improving the impact of teaching in writing so that this is consistently good throughout the whole school.
- Teaching in the early years is consistently strong, with seamless teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants. Work is matched carefully to the next steps in children's development and dynamic teaching in some sessions enables them to make outstanding progress.
- Throughout the school, teachers put a lot of thought into their planning and provide pupils with a good range of activities to interest them. They make good use of information and communication technology, including video clips, to inform and stimulate pupils' learning.
- Teaching assistants make a major contribution to pupils' achievement and they are very well deployed. They have good subject knowledge and provide effective support for individuals and small groups of pupils with work that is matched well to the next steps in their learning, sometimes working with the less or most able. Teaching assistants have an in-depth knowledge of the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and keep a regular overview of their progress.
- The teaching of reading is good. Children get off to a very good start in their learning of phonics (the sounds that letters represent) in the early years and in learning to read simple sentences. This is built on well at Key Stage 1 and the school has put a lot of work in this year to support pupils who need extra help in preparation for the Year 1 phonics screening. Throughout the school, guided reading sessions generally provide pupils with good opportunities to develop a range of reading and comprehension skills.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers prepare their lessons well and make good use of practical equipment to support pupils' learning. They usually provide clear explanations so that pupils understand the method to use and ask skilled questions to check pupils' understanding. Where pupils pick their own level of challenge, they are mainly clear about expectations and choose well. Teachers mark pupils' mathematics books regularly, with clear pointers for improvement, but pupils do not always respond to these comments.
- The teaching of writing is good in the early years and in most classes at Key Stage 2 but it requires improvement at Key Stage 1. Lessons are well planned to provide interesting activities and pupils throughout the school have weekly opportunities to write at length. Teachers regularly check pupils' progress against the targets in their books and marking often provides them with guidance on how to improve, though this is not always as specific as it could be. In particular, teachers do not pay enough attention to correcting pupils' spelling. At Key Stage 1, teachers do not always make sure pupils are clear about what is expected, for example, by showing them an example of what their writing should be like before they start a piece of written work of their own.
- While teachers generally match tasks to the learning of different groups of pupils, there are times when teachers do not make clear to pupils exactly what they need to do to succeed with a given task. Invariably, some pupils make less progress than they could when this happens. Lack of clarity about what pupils need to do to succeed also means that on occasion, pupils' evaluation of their own work and that of their classmates is less focused than it could be.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the last inspection, senior leaders have taken firm action to raise achievement and to identify areas where pupils could make better progress. The school's own very detailed data show that pupils currently in the school have made at least the expected amount of progress, and their progress has been good in most year groups in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Many children join the early years with attainment that is weak in speaking and listening, reading and writing, and in their personal, social and emotional development. In other areas, their attainment is typical of that normally found for their age. Children's attainment was slightly below the national average at the end of the Reception year in 2014, but this was a significant improvement on the previous year. Children currently in the Reception classes are making good progress in all areas of learning and their skills are typical of those normally found for their age.
- The school's results in the Year 1 phonics screening have improved year on year since the last inspection, though they were just below average in 2014. Pupils throughout the school are currently making good progress in reading and in their knowledge of phonics. As a result, pupils in Year 1 are working in line with expectations for their age and those who read to an inspector showed a good knowledge of phonics.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 have shown gradual improvement since the last inspection. They were broadly average in reading and mathematics in 2014, but below average in writing. Pupils in Year 2 currently show a good understanding of mathematical concepts and read with confidence and expression. The most-able pupils produce imaginative written work although pupils' overall attainment in writing is below expectations. Nevertheless, given that these pupils' attainment was low when they moved up to Year 1, their progress last year and this year has been good at Key Stage 1.
- It has taken time for the school to raise standards at the end of Year 6 and to tackle the legacy of underachievement found at the last inspection. Standards at the end of Year 6 were broadly average in mathematics and reading in 2014 but below average in writing and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils made good progress in reading but did less well in mathematics and writing than pupils nationally. School data show that most other year groups made good progress, however, in the last academic year.
- Pupils currently in the school have made mostly good progress in all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2. This has led to an improvement in standards with good quality work evident especially in Year 6. A higher proportion of older pupils are working at higher levels than in previous years.
- Disadvantaged pupils were two terms behind their classmates in mathematics in 2014, and three terms behind in reading and writing. They were three and half terms behind all pupils nationally in mathematics and reading, and five terms behind pupils nationally in writing. However, disadvantaged pupils made slightly more progress than their classmates in reading and mathematics, and similar progress to them in writing. They made similar progress to all pupils nationally in mathematics but less progress in reading and writing.
- An increase in the amount of support provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and for disadvantaged pupils, means that both groups are now making good progress and the school is meeting their needs well. This has resulted in disadvantaged pupils outperforming their classmates in Year 6 this year in reading and mathematics, and attaining in line with them in writing.
- The most-able pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. At both key stages, they nearly always make good progress in lessons. They cover a good amount of work in mathematics and develop their problem-solving well. They write extensively, varying their style and using increasingly sophisticated language and grammatical structures.

The early years provision is good

- The early years is led and managed well. Teachers have very thorough systems for collecting information about what children can already do when they join the school. These include home visits, liaison with pre-schools and nurseries, and good opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's assessment. Once children have started in the early years, communication with parents is good: they are kept well informed about their children's learning and have plenty of opportunities to get involved.
- Children are making good progress and achieving well because the staff have focused strongly not only on making up for the gaps in their basic skills on entry but also on promoting their development in all areas of learning. Although standards in the past have been well below those nationally at the end of the Reception Year, children currently in the early years are being well prepared for moving up to Year 1.
- Teaching is good and in some sessions, such as a phonics lesson, it enables children to make outstanding progress. Teachers and teaching assistants work extremely well together, and choose activities that are a very good match to the next steps in children's learning. In phonics sessions during the inspection, a wide range of activities at different levels of challenge enabled all groups of children to make rapid progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at asking children questions and promoting their thinking and language development. The staff have high expectations and develop in children the belief that they can succeed even when the work is hard, for instance, saying, 'I know you can do this'.
- The children behave well and feel safe. Routines are well established and children are happy and quickly become absorbed in the many activities provided. Though some of the equipment is rather 'tired', the classrooms contain a wealth of interesting materials and the large outdoor area is a hive of activity.

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	114765
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	462112

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Allocca
Headteacher	Sarah Donnelly
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2013
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