

St George’s Cathedral Catholic Primary School

33 Westminster Bridge Road, Southwark, London SE1 7JB

Inspection dates

4–5 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior leaders and governors have not taken effective steps to maintain typically good teaching during a period of staff turbulence.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. Some teachers lack sufficient skills to implement the agreed teaching policies effectively.
- Some teachers do not set sufficiently challenging tasks for the more-able pupils. The quality of questions which teachers ask pupils is too variable.
- Pupils get off to a good start in learning to read but the progress of too many slows as they get older.
- Leaders’ plans for school improvement do not focus sharply enough on how they intend to improve outcomes for pupils.
- School leaders and governors are not ensuring that the behaviour policy is applied effectively so that it improves the attitudes of those pupils who find it the most difficult to manage their behaviour.
- Some pupils and parents remain concerned about the impact of the repeated poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The good early years provision gets children off to a positive start.
- An open, honest culture is successfully created by senior leaders which promotes modern British values well.
- Governance has improved and now provides skilful, tenacious challenge to school leaders by well-informed governors.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress from often very low starting points.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disability are well supported and make similar progress to other pupils.
- Pupils develop strong moral and spiritual awareness which enables them to consider difficult or challenging issues sensitively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring plans for improvement are sharply focused on holding teachers to account for rapidly improving outcomes so that they become good.
- Ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented effectively by all staff so that pupils who find it hardest to uphold the school's values rapidly improve their behaviour.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring teachers have the skills needed to apply the agreed assessment policy effectively
 - setting work which enables pupils, including the most able, to take the next step in their learning
 - planning lessons which motivate and challenge pupils to try their best
 - checking that teachers use the training they are given to improve their effectiveness in ensuring pupils make good progress in their reading
 - questioning pupils effectively so that they can deepen their understanding and so any mistakes are promptly picked up.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Senior leaders and governors have been unable to ensure that the quality of teaching has remained good through a turbulent period of staff change. They have identified the right priorities in their plans for improvement. The headteacher has created an open culture in which improvement can be pursued with honesty. However, leaders have not identified sharp enough measures of success to make sure these plans are effective in sustaining good outcomes for pupils.
- Middle leaders set their own priorities for improvement and can explain how they monitor the impact of their work. However, senior leaders are not ensuring these individual plans remain coherent with whole-school priorities, which rightly focus on improving the quality of teaching.
- Leaders are not making sure that new and temporary teachers understand and have the necessary skills to apply agreed teaching policies effectively. They manage the performance of more established teachers systematically. However, the objectives they set teachers do not always pinpoint how their achievement will accelerate pupils' progress. Leaders do not check and record steps teachers are making towards achieving these objectives frequently enough. As a result, the quality of teaching is inconsistent.
- A wide range of training and support has been arranged by leaders. This has been suitably focused but its impact has not been checked well enough. Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching staff. Despite this, teachers newer to the school and those who are less experienced are not supported and challenged to improve as effectively as they need to be.
- The leaders for the early years and for pupils with special educational needs use information about pupils well to decide on future plans for improvement.
- Senior leaders have recently realised that they need to check more frequently on how effectively additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is being spent. This is beginning to provide them with better evidence to decide how well resources are being used to support the learning of these pupils, particularly in reading.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, offering interesting and stimulating topics and themes which strike a chord with pupils' lives. Leaders have been careful to build in opportunities for pupils to broaden their horizons. The range and application of computer technology has been strengthened since the last inspection. It supports pupils in their learning across the whole curriculum well. Leaders have not been so successful in making sure all the teachers they employ have the subject knowledge necessary to enable pupils to make the most of the curriculum on offer.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils is effective. Pupils are proud of their school community. Leaders have high expectations of the responsibility pupils are expected to take. A culture of open and honest dialogue ensures that challenging and sensitive issues such as grief can be discussed and reflected upon well. Pupils are well prepared for their future responsibilities and challenges in modern British society.
- The primary sport premium has been spent well to extend the opportunities pupils enjoy to see the benefits of sport for their health and personal development. More than half of pupils now participate in one of the various sports clubs on offer. The street dance club is a particular favourite with pupils.
- Leaders have sensibly kept looking beyond the school for opportunities to sustain school improvement. The local authority has a well-informed view of the school's effectiveness and provides helpful support for the development of the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance has improved since the last inspection. Information is used with increasing skill to consider how to spend additional funding. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses better.
 - Governors use evidence from a wide range of sources to ask well-considered questions of leaders. They sustain enquiry over time until they are satisfied that improvements have been secured. Governors check up on safeguarding arrangements regularly. They have the skills needed to offer support to school leaders when faced with challenging, sensitive issues. They make sure pay awards are linked to the impact teachers are making on outcomes for pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Checks on the suitability of staff meet statutory requirements. Procedures to identify and respond promptly to concerns are well understood by staff. Referrals to appropriate authorities outside the school are made promptly and in accordance with the agreed policies. Training for staff is up to date and covers important issues relevant to the school

community. However, senior leaders do not analyse information recorded well enough to identify patterns or anticipate potential concerns. Some parents and pupils remain concerned about the recurrent poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been adversely affected by regular and extensive changes in staff in recent months. The progress of pupils is being restricted because some lessons do not provide activities which match their abilities closely enough. The skill and subject knowledge of teachers is too variable to ensure all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The agreed assessment policy provides a suitable framework to help teachers use information to plan next steps in learning. However, some teachers are not skilled enough to apply this when deciding how to extend pupils' learning.
- Teachers ask questions to promote learning in a regular and systematic manner. However, the quality of this questioning is variable. Questions sometimes fail to help pupils deepen their understanding or correct misconceptions.
- The agreed policy and procedures for developing reading are understood by pupils and supported by an improved range of resources. However, further training to help teachers develop reading comprehension skills has been only partially successful.
- In some parts of the school, more effective teaching is leading to improved rates of pupil progress. Different work is set for pupils of different abilities which closely matches their needs. There is appropriate challenge to assist more-able pupils in deepening their understanding.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language do well because teachers understand how to help them make good progress from very basic levels of understanding.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disability are supported effectively. This allows them to take part in lessons and make similar rates of progress to other pupils from their starting points.
- The teaching of early skills in reading, writing and mathematics, including phonics (letters and the sounds that they make), is skilful.
- The teaching of writing has improved, although the quality of guidance which teachers give to help pupils build on their emerging skills is not consistently good.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **requires improvement**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. The vast majority of pupils uphold the school's values well. However, some pupils are not overcoming more significant barriers to regulating their behaviour quickly enough. They are not considering the impact of their actions on the welfare of others. Some parents and pupils remain concerned about this.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually and morally. Pupils are able to explain the importance of contributing to their community.
- Pupils enjoy lunchtime and benefit from the tempting, nutritious food options available.
- Pupils new to the school are warmly received and feel at home quickly. This contributes significantly to the rapid progress most make in their learning.
- The successful promotion of positive, warm and open relationships contributes well to pupils' personal development and welfare. Pupils say staff are easy to talk to and appear interested in their welfare.
- Pupils are taught well to recognise different types of bullying. They can explain how school leaders support them if they feel at risk from bullying. They also understand the risks associated with using the internet. The school has been effective in engaging parents with e-learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The vast majority of pupils are committed to their learning and behave respectfully to one another and the adults in the school. However, the school's behaviour policy is not applied effectively enough to improve the poorer behaviour of a small minority of pupils.
- Pupils' work and attitudes in lessons are typically positive. However, low-level disruption becomes more common when standards of teaching dip. Some pupils do not try as hard when a new teacher takes over until they realise these less positive attitudes have been noticed and challenged.

- Pupils' books are well looked after and work is seen through to completion in most cases. A few books seen during the inspection, including more recently introduced guided reading books, do not exemplify the same good attitudes to learning.
- There are very few recorded instances of bullying or other discriminatory behaviour. However, records of reasons for imposing a sanction of detention show that a small number of pupils occasionally act in ways which indicate insufficient regard for the needs or rights of others.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are about the same as that seen nationally. Leaders tackle persistent absence robustly and are tenacious in their efforts to work with parents when absence becomes a concern.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils in reading by the end of key stage 2 in 2015 were well below the national average. Leaders have taken steps to improve the teaching of reading. However, too many pupils continue to attain at levels below those expected for their age, particularly in the lower part of key stage 2.
- Pupils' progress through key stage 2 is too variable and requires improvement. Rates of progress are better in the current Year 6. In other years, weaknesses in teaching, and a large amount of staff change, have led to weaker progress. Pupils' books demonstrate these variations. The schools' own progress information indicates that the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress in key stage 2 is too low.
- Children get off to a good start as a result of good progress in the early years. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in developing their early reading skills so that the proportion reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 is higher than the national average.
- By the end of key stage 1 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels of attainment is broadly similar to that seen nationally. However, weaknesses in the skills of teachers to stretch more-able learners means that the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment is too low.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress a result of recent decisions to check on the impact of additional support more frequently. In 2015 these pupils were about five months behind their peers in reading and a year behind other pupils nationally. In writing and mathematics, disadvantaged pupils did as well as other pupils nationally and better than their peers in the school.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make at least the same progress as others, and often better progress. Those who arrive at the school with little or no English are particularly well supported. Most go on to attain at levels typical for their age by the time they reach the end of Year 6.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. Needs are identified promptly and accurately. The application of skills acquired through additional support is checked up on well by the leader responsible for these pupils.

Early years provision

is good

- The proportion of children attaining a good level of development has risen so it is above the national average. The good leadership has led to typically good teaching over time. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Some variations remain between outcomes for boys and girls. The leaders' well-considered priorities for further improvements are sharply focused on improving outcomes for boys so this gap closes.
- There is very effective engagement with parents. Early reading and writing skills are developed more rapidly because of the commitment which the school has secured from parents in helping their children with this.
- The outdoor area has been much improved. Children can learn about living things in the wildlife area, which is a rare natural resource in the school's urban setting. Children are guided skilfully to make the most of the resources on offer.
- Teachers make effective, regular and meticulously recorded checks on children's learning and understanding. This helps them to adapt plans to suit the needs of individual children.
- The rich curriculum helps more-able learners get to grips with more challenging ideas. For example, an 'ice dinosaur' topic helped them understand the reversible nature of melting and solidifying.
- Children's personal development is very well promoted in a safe and secure environment. Teachers' expectations are clear. Their extensive understanding of each individual means that children learn to regulate their own behaviour and adapt it to suit different occasions.

School details

Unique reference number	100828
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	10010954

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alex Scott
Headteacher	Ann Higgs
Telephone number	020 7525 9250
Website	https://st-georges-cathedral.eschools.co.uk/
Email address	office@stgcs.southwark.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 October 2010

Information about this school

- This school is above average in size, compared with other primary schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average. Pupils are from a range of backgrounds, the most numerous group being pupils from an African or other Black heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also well above average.
- A significant number of pupils arrive and leave the school during the school year.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to additional pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is also above average.
- The children attending the Nursery do so on a part-time basis.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations in 23 lessons. Some of these were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work and talked to them about their learning.
- Inspectors spoke with a group of pupils and observed them carrying out reading activities in a number of lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and a group of teaching staff.
- A meeting was also held with an officer from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 17 responses to the online Parent View survey. They also considered responses submitted by parents during the inspection. Inspectors also met with a number of parents as they arrived with the children at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised the range of documents, including the school's own information on current pupils' progress, leaders' plans for improvement and safeguarding records.

Inspection team

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Denise James-Mason	Ofsted Inspector

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