

# St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School

Hills Terrace, Chatham, Kent, ME4 6PX

**Inspection dates** 15–16 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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.

- Pupils' overall attainment is below the national average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Although improvements have been made and many pupils, particularly in Years 3 to 6, are making good progress, better standards have not been sustained over time.
- Pupils do better in reading and writing than they do in mathematics. Pupils do not have good enough understanding and use of mathematical language, which hampers their learning.
- There is not enough good or outstanding teaching to secure good achievement across the school. Leaders have improved teaching but not yet enough to make it good overall.
- Expectations are not always high enough and so pupils of all abilities do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- The pace of teaching and learning is often too slow to promote better achievement.
- The most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to do as well as they should.

### The school has the following strengths

- Through their well-considered and effective actions, the headteacher, senior leaders and governors are improving the outcomes for pupils and have demonstrated well the capacity to make further improvements.
- Progress is improving and is good for pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- Attendance is average but improving.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the ways in which the school involves them in their children's learning.
- The school is a happy, caring place to be. Pupils have good attitudes to learning, behave well and enjoy coming to school. They feel safe in school and take pride in their accomplishments.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed substantial parts of 20 lessons, many of which were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors observed small group sessions, talked to pupils about their work and listened to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other staff with key leadership responsibilities, groups of pupils, governors and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school's own check on its performance, its improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information on the quality of teaching and the safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 21 responses to the online Parent View survey and spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. They also looked at 17 questionnaires returned by staff.

## Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jill Thewlis	Additional Inspector
David Wolfson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school and the number on roll has increased since the previous inspection.
- The school has a diverse ethnic population. Around one third of pupils are of White British heritage. The next largest groups are from other White or Black African backgrounds
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (the pupil premium), because they are known to be eligible for free school meals, are in the care of the local authority or are children from service families, is above average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Nursery and two Reception classes.
- The school provides a daily breakfast and after-school club.
- The headteacher was appointed in 2010 and the deputy headteacher in 2012. Since that time there have been many changes in staffing. There are currently four newly qualified class teachers.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better throughout the school by:
  - ensuring that all teachers have equally high expectations for what pupils of different abilities can achieve
  - keeping up a good pace to teaching and learning in all lessons to promote rapid progress
  - extending the learning and achievement of the most able pupils through challenging work and providing more opportunities for developing independence and resilience as learners.
- Raise standards and ensure that all pupils make rapid progress to catch up especially by:
  - developing pupils' understanding and use of mathematical language to accelerate their learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Children start at school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are below and sometimes well below those typical for their ages. They settle well in the Nursery and Reception classes and make steady progress but their achievement remains below the level of development expected by the time they start in Year 1.
- From their starting points in Year 1, pupils' progress is as expected in Years 1 and 2 and, more recently, good in Years 3 to 6. However, achievement requires improvement because progress has not been fast enough for pupils to 'catch up' and standards over time, although improving, have not been consistently at the expected level for their ages at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Achievement in English is stronger than achievement in mathematics because more pupils have made faster progress in reading and writing than in mathematics. This is, in part, due to a good range of additional support that has been given to pupils to boost their reading and writing, which has not been the case in mathematics. This led to above average standards at the end of Year 6 in English in 2012 although attainment dipped in 2013 despite pupils in this year group making good progress from very low starting points. In mathematics, the use and understanding of mathematical language to reinforce mathematical concepts as well as skills in calculation and mental mathematics have held pupils back, including the most able pupils.
- In the 2012 phonics screening check (linking sounds and letters) the proportion of pupils in Year 1 reaching the expected standard was above average. In 2013, the proportion increased slightly but has not kept track with the as yet unvalidated increase found nationally. Reading is a key focus for the school. Reading for enjoyment is promoted well across the school; however, early reading skills in the Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 are not developing rapidly enough to secure better achievement. Small group guided reading sessions are effective in increasing pupils' depth of comprehension skills. Pupils have good opportunities to write for different purposes, in different styles in a range of subjects, which is helping to improve their achievement.
- The school's detailed records show that the progress of different groups, including boys and girls, the most able pupils, those from different ethnic heritages and those who speak English as an additional language, is generally similar.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to others although they lagged behind in Year 4. Additional support is effective, particularly when pupils work with individual or small group support with teaching assistants who ensure that their learning needs are well met.
- In the 2012 national tests, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 who received support funded by the pupil premium was six months behind that of their classmates in English and nearly 16 months behind in mathematics. In 2013 in most year groups, the gaps in progress narrowed except in Year 1 and Year 4 where the gaps widened.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, although, as in the rest of the school, progress is improving, not enough children are achieving a good level of development, particularly in reading, writing, number and shape and space.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement as there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. There is some good and occasionally outstanding teaching; however, over time teaching has not been consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils achieve well.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve are not consistently high enough. Although teachers generally prepare different work for pupils of different abilities, this is not always done accurately enough and therefore work is not always pitched at the right level.
- The pace of teaching and learning is sometimes too slow, often because teachers spend too

much time talking in the beginning of lessons. This limits the amount of time pupils have to get on with their work and make the progress they should.

- Teaching does not always sufficiently extend the learning of the most able pupils. Work is not always demanding enough and sometimes there are too few opportunities for them to develop resilience and independence as learners.
- Marking and feedback to pupils are regular and there is a consistent system used by all teachers and understood by pupils. Pupils have time to respond to teachers' comments and say that they are helped to improve their learning as a result. They are motivated to learn through evaluating their own progress and using learning journals throughout the school to track their own achievements.
- The most effective teaching is challenging, motivating, provides well-planned activities with high expectations for pupils' learning and moves new learning forward at a brisk pace. For example, Year 6 pupils showed great enthusiasm and determination in mathematical problem-solving activities because they worked successfully to tight deadlines, rose to the challenge of demanding tasks and as a result made good progress.
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils and pupils want to do well, behave well and work hard. They have lots of opportunities to discuss their ideas together to develop and share their ideas and opinions and work well together. For example, pupils in Year 2 enjoyed writing their own beginnings to traditional tales and although they were writing their own work, they discussed their ideas together and learnt from each other, going on to produce some quality pieces of writing.
- Teachers generally keep pupils fully involved in lessons and ask good questions that help to develop pupils' thinking and extend their learning. Teachers ensure that there are clear success criteria for individual lessons that are shared with pupils and revisited throughout lessons.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are happy and secure. In the Reception classes, children often have to sit and listen to teachers for too long without enough opportunities to be more active in their learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils say they enjoy school very much and this is reflected in their improved attendance. They enjoy learning and the friendships they make. They are especially enthusiastic about the various trips they go on which they say is just one of 'the good things that has happened since the new headteacher came'.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They behave equally well in class lessons and when they are working with teaching assistants outside of class lessons. Pupils agree that behaviour is good and say it has improved. Records show that behaviour has improved over time with a considerable reduction in behaviour incidents and exclusions over the last couple of years.
- Although good overall, behaviour is not outstanding because where lessons do not fully engage, motivate or challenge pupils they can become distracted and inattentive.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and well cared for. They know how to keep themselves safe, for example through a good understanding of safety on the internet. They say they are not aware of any bullying in school. They do, however, have a good understanding of different types of bullying such as name calling, physical and cyber bullying. The good, trusting relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils are confident to turn to them should any problems arise.
- Pupils are polite and kind and play and work together well. They are caring, considerate and respectful.
- The breakfast and after-school club provide a good, safe and sociable start and end to the day for those pupils who attend.
- Most parents who responded to the online survey or spoke to inspectors believe their children are happy, feel safe at school and are well looked after and the large majority agree that pupils

are well behaved. Inspection findings support these views.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher, who is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, leads the school very effectively. His ambition and vision, which is shared by all leaders including the governing body, is firmly anchored in the relentless drive to improve outcomes for pupils.
- On his appointment, the headteacher quickly identified areas that required improvement and took rapid action to bring about changes, which included swift eradication of inadequate teaching, significant refurbishment of the school to improve the learning environment and an improvement in behaviour. The positive impact of the headteacher's actions over the last three years is beginning to overturn a legacy of underachievement. In addition to the improving progress pupils are now making, this demonstrates the school's capacity to improve further.
- There is a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. All teachers, and especially those who are new to teaching or in the early stages of their teaching career, are given effective guidance by senior leaders to develop their skills in a culture of support and coaching and well targeted professional training and development.
- Senior leaders rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and where weaknesses are identified, effective support is given. Performance management procedures are well established and teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress and that this is linked to pay and salary progression. Teachers say they find the performance management process useful, positive and inspiring.
- Much improved assessment systems enable the school to keep a close check on how individuals and groups of pupils are doing so that extra support can be provided where it is needed including that to help stretch the most able pupils. The effectiveness of this is very clear in the more rapid progress made last year.
- The senior leadership team is well established and makes a positive contribution to whole-school improvement as well as providing skills and expertise in their particular areas of responsibility. Leadership roles of middle managers are being developed to enhance the work of senior leaders.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well as it is firmly embedded in the subjects taught and in the ethos of the school. The school promotes its values as a church school and fosters pupils' understanding and respect for different cultures and faiths, through, for example, its international week.
- The school ensures that all pupils have access to the full range of subjects and learn without fear of any type of discrimination. There is a broad curriculum, which is enhanced with a good range of enrichment and sporting activities that have a wide take up by pupils. Pupils' personal, social and health education has a strong focus and underpins the importance the school places on promoting pupils' well-being, aspirations and self-esteem.
- The school has good plans to spend the extra funding for sports and physical education, focusing on increased participation in sports and on benefits for pupils in the long term. The funding will include participation in a local sports partnership including competitive sports, additional specialist coaches and equipment and enhancement of staff skills for the long term.
- Parents, including those inspectors spoke to, are very supportive of the school's work and vocal about the changes that have taken place. They particularly appreciate the way the school has worked to engage them in their children's learning and this is demonstrated by the fact that most parents attend the meetings to discuss their children's progress. Parents were also very positive about the increased and improved communication with the school, through, for example, the new website and the fact that the headteacher and deputy headteacher are on the playground in the mornings to welcome pupils and parents to school.
- The school works well with the local authority, which has given good support to the school.
- **The governance of the school:**

The governing body is committed to improving the school and has clearly demonstrated this by instigating an external review on the role of governors so that it can even more effectively

support the school and hold it to account for its performance. New governors have been appointed to increase the range of skills and expertise of the governing body. Governors have a good overview of teaching in the school and the links between the quality of teaching and pay and promotion. They are well informed by the headteacher and understand how well the school is doing compared to all schools nationally. They have supported the headteacher in making the improvements to the school since his appointment, particularly in the many staff changes and spending decisions. The governing body has a good knowledge of how the school uses the pupil premium funding and the plans for the new primary sports funding. The governing body ensures statutory duties are met including those for safeguarding.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118756
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	426486

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	439
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fr Christopher Baker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dominic McBride
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14–15 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 832578
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