

Blessed Mother Teresa's Catholic Primary School

Somerset Road, Highfields, Stafford, ST17 9UZ

Inspection dates

7–8 February 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress as they move through the school, and achievement across the school is improving steadily.
- The marking of pupils' work is consistently good and helps pupils understand how to improve.
- Experienced teaching assistants make a good contribution to improving behaviour and helping children learn.
- Pupils are polite and helpful and they show respect to each other and to the adults in the school. They are proud of their school and eager to learn. They behave well and say they feel safe in school.
- School leaders now insist on high standards from staff and from pupils. They monitor the work of the school effectively and take steps to improve things where this is needed.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although it is improving, progress is not yet outstanding.
- Achievement in reading lags a little way behind achievement in mathematics and writing.
- Pupils do not always know what they have to do to improve their reading.
- Teaching is not consistent and too much is good rather than outstanding.
- There is not enough use of the technical language of English and as a result children cannot always discuss their writing accurately.
- Too many pupils come to school late.
- The strong partnerships with parents that are formed during children's time in Reception are not always maintained as pupils move up through the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited parts of 11 lessons and looked at work in pupils' books. She listened to children read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body, key staff and with pupils. A telephone call was made to a representative of the local authority.
- Documents looked at included the school's self-evaluation summary, information on pupils' progress, the most recent report from the local authority and documents relating to safeguarding, school management and the curriculum.
- Parents' views were taken into account through meeting parents before school and through the school's most recent survey of parents' views. There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View) for these to be used as evidence. Staff completed a questionnaire for the inspector.
- During the inspection, four of the seven permanent teachers in the school were absent because of illness or authorised leave.

Inspection team

Mary Le Breuilly, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average size for a primary school.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- A higher-than-average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for pupil premium funding (additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and the children of service families).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is much higher than average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is also much higher than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is a nursery class in school which, although it is privately managed, is integrated with the reception class. The Nursery was not inspected during this inspection.
- Pupils in the school do not attend any alternative off-site provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching and progress consistently outstanding through:
 - refining the match between learning activity and the ability of pupils so that they are all stretched and challenged in their work whatever their skills and abilities
 - ensuring that all pupils, including the younger ones, know what their next steps in learning are, especially in reading and mathematics
 - making better use of the technical language of English so that children can discuss their writing better
 - encouraging pupils of all ages to work independently and to develop resilience in helping themselves and each other when they are stuck.
- Reduce the number of pupils who come to school late.
- Build on the very positive relationships with parents that develop in Reception and maintain these relationships as children move through the school and, in particular, look at ways of establishing regular, informal contact between teachers and parents.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children's attainment when they enter school, although variable because of low numbers, is usually below that of children nationally. During reception year they make good progress and by the time they start Year 1 they have almost caught up with other children of their age.
- Phonics testing at the end of Year 1 shows that pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds they make is similar to that of other children of their age across the country.
- Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 1 fluctuates because of the small numbers in each year group and because of varying proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs from year to year. By the end of year 2, attainment is broadly similar to other pupils of the same age. In the past year or two, pupils have made better progress in Year 2 than in year 1 and this means that overall their progress has been just above what is expected across the key stage.
- Standards in Key Stage 2 are similar to the average for their age, and are improving over time, particularly in mathematics.
- The progress that children make from Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2 is now good across the different year groups and current figures from the school show that some children are beginning to make outstanding progress. This is particularly the case in mathematics where standards have been rising at a faster rate than that seen nationally. Many pupils say that their favourite lesson is mathematics, and this is a reflection of the work the school has put into improving teaching and hence progress in this subject. Pupils also make good progress in writing. Pupils' progress in reading, though now good, is a little slower than in writing and mathematics. In the Early Years Foundation Stage the teaching of phonics helps most pupils to learn to read quickly but progress in reading is not as rapid in other Key Stages.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress. Additional funding provides small group support and special programmes of work to help pupils to catch up.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in general, though sometimes poor attendance hinders this. Staff identify their needs accurately and give them the support they need to achieve well. They are fully involved in all parts of school life.

The quality of teaching

is good

- School leaders have taken steps to address weak teaching and the quality of teaching has improved. They have been successful in improving the quality of teaching overall and some of the teaching, particularly from those with responsibilities across the school, is outstanding. As a result progress is improving quickly. Most teaching is now good and some is outstanding.
- Children usually work hard for their teachers and they look up to them. They are keen to learn and want to do their best. They develop a love of learning and enjoy their lessons.
- Teachers in the Reception Year are effective in planning a multitude of activities and choices, to enable children to explore and improve their knowledge and skills. Children learn both indoors and outside and have many opportunities to develop their communication skills and physical

dexterity and to use their imagination.

- The teaching of phonics is well-structured and effective, although some adults were not fully consistent in sounding the letters correctly. Pupils are developing a love of reading though they do not all read widely yet.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they are able to plan effective lessons. Both they and the teaching assistants use good questioning techniques to develop pupils' thinking and extend their learning.
- The marking of pupils' work, which was an area for development in the previous inspection, is now consistently good in English and mathematics and sometimes outstanding. There is real clarity for the pupils on how to improve their writing and their mathematics. However, the correction of spelling, punctuation and grammar needs to improve if all marking is to be outstanding.
- Older pupils are able to say what their targets for improvement are, and they know what they have to do to improve. Younger pupils are less sure about this.
- Teachers make some provision in class for the different abilities and skills of the pupils. In some cases pupils are taught with another year group so that the work meets their needs better. However, within classrooms this is not yet finely tuned enough to ensure all pupils are challenged and supported according to their needs. For example, in some classrooms teachers provided pupils with useful checklists for them to assess their writing by themselves, but the most-able and the least-able had the same checklists and so opportunities were lost for clarifying the next step in their learning that matched the ability of each child.
- In the best lessons, teachers questioned pupils closely and kept a close check on what they had learnt, providing them with good opportunities to evaluate their own progress
- In some lessons seen, children were very reluctant to work on their own and regularly sought reassurance from the teacher or teaching assistants. This means they do not develop the resilience they need to work independently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The majority of pupils in the school behave well and respond positively to their teachers. When pupils enter the school a few of them have problems adjusting to the behaviour expected by the school. The school uses visiting experts to help them support these children. As they get older they learn to behave well. Exclusions are very rare and the only recent exclusions relate to pupils who are new and have not yet settled into school.
- Pupils like the red and yellow card system of managing behaviour that the school has recently introduced. They say it is fair and that it is helping children to behave well. Minor disruption in classes is quickly dealt with in general. Lunch and break times are generally orderly.
- The adults at the school work well together in the best interest of all the pupils. They promote equal opportunity and ensure that there is no discrimination. Experienced teaching assistants make a positive contribution to both the behaviour and the learning of pupils.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and they have many opportunities to learn how to keep

themselves safe, including when using the Internet. They feel that the adults in school will listen to them if they have a concern and are confident in approaching staff when they have a problem. If any bullying occurs it is quickly dealt with. The safeguarding of pupils meets requirements and parents feel that their children are safe at school.

- Attendance last term was average and it is improving overall, though snowy weather and virus outbreaks have affected attendance figures this term. However, too many children arrive at school late.
- The Catholic nature of the school plays a large part in the daily life of the school and pupils have many opportunities for private reflection and prayer. They learn about other cultures and religions as well as their own.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders keep a close eye on how individual pupils are progressing, what teachers are doing to make sure pupils make sufficient progress, and what further support pupils might need to prevent them falling behind. They make sure that children at risk of falling behind are able to catch up.
- The systems the school has put in place to support its smooth running and to identify and tackle areas of weakness are robust and effective. Governors described a significant “tightening up” of management since the last inspection and this is evident in the efficiency with which the school is now managed.
- Careful monitoring by senior leaders has helped them to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The headteacher, her senior team, and the governors, have a realistic view of the school, based on evidence. Because of this they are able to plan for improvements in an accurate and effective way.
- The headteacher works slightly reduced hours and the deputy headteacher acts in her place when she is not in school. This has led to a strong partnership and highly effective sharing of responsibilities between them.
- Teachers are appraised for their performance against targets which include how much progress pupils make and the standards they reach. Training for staff is linked to their individual needs and to the school’s priorities. Teachers are keen to do their best for the pupils and welcome the school’s efforts to help them develop their teaching skills. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- The school curriculum links some subjects together into topics that help make learning more coherent and more relevant to the pupils. The wide range of visits, visitors and special activities in school help to bring learning to life. The school meets the legal requirements that set out what a school should be teaching. Pupils develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills across subjects, for example with opportunities to write extensively in subjects other than English.
- The local authority provides light touch support to the school, although the school has bought in additional support in order to help it improve more rapidly. The local authority regards the school as a good school.

- Parents, though generally positive about the school, had some reservations about a number of minor issues. The Reception class provides many opportunities, both formal and informal, for parents to see their children learning and to talk to teachers and as a result parents have confidence in the start their children receive at the school. However, because parents are not allowed in the playground at the start of the school day those with older children have few opportunities for informal chatting to teachers which means that some issues build up more than they need to before they are resolved.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Members of the governing body know the school well and show a strong sense of commitment. Some of them give a great deal of their time to supporting the school. They understand what good progress looks like and they challenge the school well. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas of relative weakness. They hold senior leaders accountable for the school's performance, particularly the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They effectively manage the performance of headteacher and staff. Systems are in place for the approval of pay awards so that these are always tied to how well staff help pupils to achieve. Governors make sure that safeguarding procedures meet requirements and are consistently applied. They monitor the budget and they are aware that additional funding such as the pupil premium must be used to support pupils' achievement. This funding has been spent, amongst other things, on additional staffing to support eligible pupils in improving their skills in English and mathematics. The school is effective in narrowing any gap between the attainment of individuals eligible for the funding and other pupils.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	124370
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	406237

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul McGarrigle
Headteacher	D Jane Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2011
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