

# St Clare's Catholic Primary School

Robert Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B20 3RT

**Inspection dates** 14–15 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- The headteacher is driving school improvement very well. She has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in what the school provides for its pupils. This is ensuring a strong focus on improving achievement.
- Pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds make good overall progress from their different starting points.
- Standards are improving and are close to national averages when the pupils leave the school. Pupils make especially good progress in mathematics.
- Teaching is good across the school. Staff have good working relationships with the pupils. They praise the efforts pupils make to improve their work.
- Behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils from different ethnic groups get on well together.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Senior staff and phase leaders (for different age groups) carefully check pupils' progress and use this information to identify what additional support pupils may need.
- Leaders and staff work well together as a team, with many proudly noting the recent improvement in many areas.
- Governance is good. Governors are supportive, understand data on pupils' performance and hold the school to account for the standards achieved.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress pupils make in English is not as strong as in mathematics. This is because their speaking, reading and writing skills are not always secure.
- Teachers do not always plan enough activities that challenge all pupils, or make sure marking helps them to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are not always effective enough in supporting pupils in their work.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in part of 26 lessons. Some of these were joint lesson observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, the special educational needs coordinator and phase leaders (those leading year group teams). Discussions also took place with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were not enough responses to take account of from the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). However, inspectors spoke to several parents and carers at the start of both days of the inspection. Inspectors also reviewed the 42 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including data on pupils' progress and planning, and monitoring information. Inspectors listened to several pupils reading and they scrutinised samples of recent work. They also considered in detail records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Sue Hall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Clive Lewis	Additional Inspector
Linda Brown	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Around 97% of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, which is well above the national average. More than 70% of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school has a 52-place nursery.
- A very high number of pupils join or leave partway through their primary school education. A large proportion change schools between Nursery and Year 6.
- Around 48% of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which is well above the national average. In this school, the pupil premium provides additional funding for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and a very small number who are looked after by the local authority. The latter group is not referred to in the report in order to avoid identifying individuals. Several other families are awaiting confirmation of their immigration status and their eligibility for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs identified at school action is below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- At the time of the last inspection, an executive headteacher and head of school had just taken up their temporary roles. The head of school was appointed as acting headteacher in September 2013 and headteacher in February 2014.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

- Further raise achievement in English by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their speaking skills throughout the school and in a range of subjects
  - helping pupils to develop a greater enjoyment and confidence in their reading skills by developing the ability to work out unfamiliar words
  - enabling pupils to spell accurately, write grammatically and use correct punctuation.
- Improve teaching and learning by:
  - making sure that all staff provide work that challenges pupils of different abilities, and especially the more able
  - checking that the marking of pupils' work identifies clearly what they need to improve and that pupils have understood and acted on teachers' comments
  - making sure that teaching assistants are actively involved in checking pupils' work and providing support.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage or other year groups with skills and experiences that are well below what is typical for their different ages. Throughout the school, several pupils are new to the country or new to learning English. Most adapt well to their surroundings and make good, and sometimes very rapid, progress from their different starting points.
- Children in the Nursery made good progress when learning to use speech bubbles to record what pirates might say when discovering treasure. Those in Reception also found out how pirates see ships far away by investigating how to use telescopes.
- Checks at the end of Year 1 of pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) show their skills are well below average. Staff have recently improved the way they teach these skills in order to help pupils develop a more secure understanding of how to work out new words.
- Tests in Year 2 indicate that standards have been well below average for some time. Data in Year 6 show that, while standards have been a little below national averages, pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds now make good progress. Recent assessment information indicates that pupils are set to do better than previously in this year's end-of-key-stage tests.
- Pupils do particularly well in mathematics and have done so for some time. Standards in Year 6 are in line with national averages and this represents considerable progress over the course of Key Stage 2. Most pupils have a secure understanding of numbers and how to calculate, but are not always quite as confident when explaining what they are doing.
- Pupils' skills in English are not as good as those in mathematics. Many initially have little grasp of English, lack confidence in their skills or do not speak in grammatically correct sentences. They often make rapid progress but their lack of confidence in speaking affects their learning.
- Pupils' reading skills are initially below average. The school has introduced a new reading scheme to interest the pupils and help develop reading in a systematic manner. Pupils are now making good progress in reading, although few show a love of books. Pupils' skills in writing are also below average but improving. This is because pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation skills are not yet consistently good across the school. The sample of recent work in Year 6, however, shows some high-quality writing, including that in pupils' 'theme' books.
- Data indicate that previously boys did not do as well as girls, and to a greater degree than seen nationally. The school now regularly checks and tracks the progress of all groups of pupils and provides well-targeted support. This includes effective booster work by teaching staff, including extra reading and writing tasks which is helping ensure there are no significant difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils.
- Pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding make good progress. In Year 6 in 2013, they were two terms behind their classmates in mathematics and almost a year behind in reading and writing.
- Additional sports funding is making a positive impact on standards, including in gymnastics.
- Less-able pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because work is well matched to their specific learning needs and they receive effective

additional support. This includes the work of the learning mentor and a 'City Year' mentoring programme by local young people, which includes a focus on Black African and Caribbean boys. More-able pupils are also given additional support but as yet do not always achieve all they can. Overall, the gaps between the attainment and progress made by different groups of pupils are closing at a good rate.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- The school has developed a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. Lesson observations, assessments of pupils' progress and performance and samples of their work over the course of the past year indicate that teaching is now typically good, particularly in Year 6.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and know how to teach pupils of different ages and abilities well. This was seen in a lesson in Year 6 where pupils were challenged to identify the features of the artist Keith Haring, which they did in an animated and knowledgeable manner. They then acted as a critic of their previous designs when working in this style prior to producing larger-sized versions of their work. In another Year 6 lesson, pupils planned a mystery story and made outstanding progress after identifying what to improve.
- The school has considerably extended its support for different groups of pupils, including those at the early stages of learning English, to ensure that they are able to reach their potential. Booster groups are supported through the work of additional teachers and the deputy headteacher. This well-focused work is helping to close the gaps between different groups of pupils. Good use of the pupil premium is making a positive impact on learning. This includes the appointment of new teaching assistants and a project to promote imaginative play and the development of communication skills of the younger children.
- Consistently good management of pupils ensures that lessons are conducted in a calm and purposeful manner. Staff have close working relationships with pupils and value their efforts. This helps raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem which improves their learning.
- Good teaching of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps them settle quickly. Staff ensure outdoor activities are linked to themes such as Pirates to help develop imagination and communication skills. For example, because the children were interested in searching for hidden treasure in the sand pit, they cooperated well and this increased their confidence in speaking.
- The planning of lessons is generally good and takes account of the range of ability in the class. However, some examples of recent work show that pupils of all abilities sometimes focus on the same or very similar tasks, which do not always stretch and challenge the most able.
- Staff mark pupils' work conscientiously but do not always make clear exactly what they need to do to improve it. Sometimes marking is not revisited to see if pupils have addressed what they needed to do and whether they learn from their mistakes.
- The work of teaching assistants is generally good and some is very effective, including that in the Nursery. In other lessons, support staff are less involved in checking pupils' work and helping to move their learning forwards.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say they like coming to school. Observations and

discussions indicate that they typically behave well in a range of activities.

- Pupils from different ethnic groups get on well together. Most are usually polite to each other and to the adults around them. They enjoy working with a partner and in a small group. When older pupils discuss and assess the work of their classmates, they do this in a quite mature manner.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils usually try hard with their work, as seen in the neat presentation in older pupils' books. Many are willing to take part in discussions and offer their ideas, especially in Year 6. However, a few in most year groups offer little and wait for others to contribute their ideas. This does not help them develop the confidence to speak to others, or to use a wider and more descriptive vocabulary.
- Attendance is close to the national average and has improved. It is now carefully checked and the school works with families with low attendance to increase this.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know that bullying is more than one incident and can explain the different types that could occur, including cyber-bullying and physical or emotional bullying. Pupils can explain in detail the possible dangers of using the internet and mobile phones. They understand what to do in case of an emergency from discussions about the work of the emergency services. Pupils are confident that teaching staff and mentors respond to any worries they may have.
- All of the parents spoken to believe that their children are kept safe and they have few concerns about pupils' behaviour.

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

- The leadership of the headteacher is very effective and has been a pivotal reason why the school has moved forward so much recently.
- Staff work well together as a team and some proudly commented, 'We are now forward looking, determined and progressive.' The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher and phase leaders, all of whom recognise the impact of the many improvements made. The development of this leadership team has extended the number of staff involved in reviewing performance and developing learning in an effective manner.
- Discussions with senior staff and phase leaders show that everyone is now much more accountable for the progress pupils make over their time at the school. Throughout the school, there are regular checks of what the pupils know, understand and can do. This information is used well to identify where additional support is needed, including for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- These regular checks of pupils' progress and the much better use of this information to track performance or identify underachievement have been key to the many improvements made. Pupil premium funding is used well to provide additional activities and extra staffing to enhance eligible pupils' confidence and skills in a range of subjects.
- The school now uses effective procedures to accurately check the quality of teaching and learning. Staff performance is managed well and linked appropriately to pay awards. Monitoring activities lead to additional training activities, including with other schools. This was seen in the use of the primary school sport funding, where a few staff indicated a lack of confidence in

teaching gymnastics. The coaching by specialist staff from another school is making a positive impact in boosting staff confidence and pupils' skills.

- While few parents responded to the inspection questionnaire, many of those spoken to noted with pleasure the recent improvements and thought that their children were happy and doing well in school.
- The school provides a good range of activities and visits to promote learning in all subjects. Pupils' work in their 'theme' books helps to provide a good range of reasons to write or solve problems. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. There are many opportunities for pupils to work together to develop their social skills, reflected in the mature discussions between some of the older pupils. Pupils enjoy celebrating festivals such as the May Procession, which promoted reflection and spiritual awareness.
- The school works well with the local authority, which provides effective support for what it rightly judges to be an improving school. Staff also work with a group of local Catholic schools and join together in staff training activities. The school is involved in several local initiatives, including the local 'City Year' project which includes the mentoring of vulnerable pupils. This is having a positive impact on helping some pupils develop more positive attitudes to their learning.
- Procedures to safeguard pupils meet current national requirements. Staff ensure that pupils have equal access to activities by providing additional support when it is most needed. This includes when pupils arrive in school and especially for those new to learning English. The school fosters positive relationships and tackles discrimination. With the many improvements made and the development of a stronger leadership team, the school demonstrates that it has the capacity to improve further.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Governors are now not only supportive but also much better informed of what happens in school. As a result, they are in a stronger position to hold leaders to account for the quality of education provided.
  - Governors have a growing understanding of what performance data tell them about the progress pupils are making, and recognise that additional training will help them develop this understanding even further. The curriculum committee and links with year groups ensure that several governors have a good understanding of pupils' achievement.
  - The governors ensure that additional funding for primary school sport and to support those eligible for the pupil premium is used appropriately to boost achievement.
  - Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and learning. They support the headteacher in managing teachers' performance and pay-related issues. Governors are keen to develop their role further, and with recent appointments and considerable enthusiasm evident they are well placed to be able to do so.

## 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>	103476
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	442528

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>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	426
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Barbara McPhillips
<b>Headteacher</b>	Victoria Rivett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 September 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 554 3289
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