

St Theresa's Catholic Primary School

Kipling Road, Blacon, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 5UU

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as a result of consistently good teaching and a well-planned learning environment.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school and leave Year 6 with standards that are similar to pupils nationally.
- Most pupils who left Year 6 in 2013 met or exceeded expectations in their progress.
- Teaching over time is consistently good, with some outstanding. Teachers ask effective questions to check pupils' understanding.
- Vulnerable pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because staff give them helpful, effective support.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are very keen to learn and manage their own and each other's behaviour. Behaviour in lessons is impeccable.
- Furthermore, safety in the school is outstanding. Bullying is almost unheard of, and pupils are taught about how to recognise risks and keep themselves safe.
- The headteacher and senior leaders provide strong, determined leadership based on accurate self-evaluation. They work effectively to improve teaching and learning.
- The governing body challenges school leaders effectively and ensures continuous improvement is at the heart of its work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always check that advice given in their marking is followed up by pupils.
- Pupils' skills in writing are not yet as strong as they are in reading and in mathematics.
- The skills of subject and middle leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are not yet fully developed.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, 13 part lessons were observed.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading and watched pupils being supported in small groups.
- The inspectors spoke with many pupils during lessons and break times. One inspector met formally with a group of pupils to find out their views about their school.
- The inspectors held meetings and had conversations with the headteacher, other senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body, the Parish Priest and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including information about the standards and progress of pupils, the school's improvement planning, pupils' work, and policies to safeguard pupils.
- In carrying out the inspection, the inspectors took into account the 15 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 22 responses made by staff to the questionnaire.

Inspection team

Gary Kelly, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Pamela Hemphill

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is average in size compared to other primary schools. The number on roll is increasing.
- The proportions of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for children who are looked after by the local authority, those from armed service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion of pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been several changes to staffing over recent years, including the appointment of a deputy headteacher.
- The school works in partnership with the Blacon Education Village Partnership of schools, which is made up of the local primary schools and a high school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding to further raise pupils' achievement by making sure that:
 - teachers make use of effective ways that help to further develop the writing skills of all pupils
 - when teachers have marked books and made suggestions for improvements, ensure pupils are given time to understand and follow up on these suggestions.
- Further develop the skills of subject and middle leaders so they can more effectively check the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are below, and sometimes well below those expected for their age. They make good progress through each part of the school to reach standards when they leave Year 6, which are similar to pupils nationally.
- As a result of consistently good teaching and an effective Early Years Foundation Stage, children who join the school, including some with very weak communication skills, make good progress. Indeed, the school's very effective work to improve the way in which children join up letters and the sounds they make to create words and sentences is reflected in the results of the Year 1 phonics screening check, which are well above average.
- Pupils continue to make good progress, and their attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is just below the national average. During this key stage, work to improve pupils' social and communication skills is very effective, adding value to the school's work in later years.
- Almost all pupils who left Year 6 in 2013 made or exceeded expectations in the progress they made in reading and mathematics during Key Stage 2.
- Pupils currently in the school continue to make good and better progress, however, progress in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 is not as strong as in either reading or mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and when asked why they like the school, their responses included, 'children here are kind and polite to each other and so are the teachers', and 'we learn well, our lessons make us understand things better'.
- In 2013, pupils eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, finished Year 6 over a year behind in mathematics, and a year behind in reading and writing. However, this group of pupils are currently making better progress and attainment gaps are narrowing, particularly in mathematics.
- The additional primary school sports funding has been used very effectively to employ a specialist Physical Education teacher as part of the Blacon Education Village (BEV). As a result, teachers told us that they are now better equipped to teach sport and promote healthy lifestyles. Pupils now access many more sports than before and the greater participation of pupils, including girls, is having a knock-on effect on health and well-being across the school.
- The work the school does to support vulnerable pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is a strength. Well-thought-out support and activities that interest and motivate pupils, supported by highly skilled teaching assistants, mean these pupils make consistently good progress. One pupil explained, 'I wasn't doing well in my old school, I came here and I have shot-up'.
- A small proportion of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language receive highly effective support to catch up and make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy reading and read regularly throughout the school. The well-focussed teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) ensures that pupils become more confident in reading unfamiliar words and sentences. A pupil in Year 4 explained how he was now much more confident reading, and enjoys reading each night at home, the interesting books the school gives him.
- The school now has much more detailed information about how well different groups of pupils are doing. Leaders use pupil progress meetings to plan activities that help pupils to learn more quickly. The school's latest assessment information shows that all pupils, including the most able are making good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Overtime, the quality of teaching in the school is good, ensuring that pupils make good progress. Interesting topics and themes are used well to support pupils' learning. Pupils like these

interesting activities and said as an example, 'we have special days that inspire us, like science week, which helps us learn better'.

- Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is consistently good and ensures that children who join the school with weak communication and language skills develop their speaking and reading skills quickly. Activities and well-focused support, enable children to become confident in playing together, within the theme of learning, whilst teachers make accurate assessments.
- The teaching of phonics and reading are taught exceptionally well both by class teachers, and highly-skilled teaching assistants. Regular reading is promoted well and pupils are confident when reading out-loud in class.
- Teachers' questioning skills make pupils think and help them to solve problems for themselves and enable teachers to make regular assessments about how well pupils are learning. In literacy, skilful questioning was used to make pupils think about what they had learned in previous lessons to support the development of their new learning. Pupils expect to be challenged and learn well together in groups, devising tasks which are tackled through discussion.
- Pupils enjoy working things out for themselves, using resources from the classroom and library to develop their ideas. The high quality classroom environment continually supports pupils' learning by providing examples of good work and stimulating pupils' thinking.
- Pupils' books are consistently well marked and include targets for improvements. Pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing because of this. However, not all pupils are given opportunities to follow up on the suggestions made by teachers about how to improve their work.
- The teaching of reading and mathematics is good, both in class and as part of the wider curriculum. Disabled pupils, those pupils who have special educational needs, and those supported by the pupil premium are supported well in their development of literacy and numeracy skills and they make good progress. However, the teaching of writing has been less effective, and therefore, some pupils do not do as well as they should in writing.
- Teaching assistants and teachers work effectively together to make sure all pupils receive the help they need. Indeed, pupils enjoy the support they receive. One pupil explained that, 'because of the extra support I've had in lessons and on my own, I can now read and write much better, I really enjoy it'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In lessons, they contribute fully and have great respect for their teachers and other adults. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary.
- Pupils are proud of their school and arrive ready to learn. Attendance has improved significantly and is now average. This is because of the good work the school has done with pupils, their families and the community, to break down barriers to learning.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are extremely positive and this contributes strongly to pupils' moral and social development.
- Standards and expectations of uniform, preparedness in lessons to learn and the extent to which pupils take responsibility in maintaining a clean, litter free environment are very high. When speaking to pupils who were collecting litter at lunchtime, they explained that, 'there is a waiting list of volunteers to do this'. Pupils in this school are extremely proud of their school and they treat it with respect.
- Corridors are tidy and pupils move around the school safely and politely. The playground is a hive of activity at break and lunchtimes.
- The school provides a wide range of activities and clubs, which are increasingly well attended. It takes a proactive approach to dealing with and informing pupils about bullying, including the different forms of bullying. Noticeboards and displays around the school make expectations and processes about how to tackle bullying clear. Incident logs confirm that behaviour is consistently excellent and incidents of bullying and exclusions are almost unheard of.
- The support offered to pupils who have difficulties in working with others and managing their

own behaviour is highly effective.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. No pupils spoken with in meetings or around the school had experiences of bullying. The school's curriculum ensures experiences that promote pupils' understanding and ability to recognise risk is highly effective.
- The school works exceptionally well with parents to support positive behaviour. When speaking to parents at the end of school, they were keen to express their support for the school and the headteacher. One parent said, 'I've had two kids come through this school, and never had an issue, its great'.
- The school's own parental surveys and the online questionnaire 'Parent View', are overwhelmingly positive about the outstanding behaviour and safety within the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, the senior team and governors provide strong and effective leadership and have clear ideas for improving pupils' achievement in the school. Self-assessment is clear and accurate, based on what the school already does well, and the areas it still needs to improve. Leaders in the school have clear plans for improvement and they monitor the impact of actions regularly.
- New systems for managing assessment information mean that leaders and teachers check how well pupils are learning each half term. However, the skills of middle and subject leaders and their impact on whole-school issues, such as improving writing and the achievement of pupils supported by the pupil premium, are not yet fully effective.
- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The outdoor learning space is well designed and used and makes a strong contribution to children's learning. The school is beginning to use assessment information more effectively which has resulted in a clear and accurate picture of the progress that children make in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Consistently good quality teaching is supported by an excellent programme of professional development, mainly through the effective local partnership, The Blacon Educational Village (BEV). This enables teachers and teaching assistants to experience best practice in different settings.
- Teachers' performance management is now more effective, ensuring that any increase in salary is appropriately linked to pupils' progress.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of activities and cultural opportunities for high-quality learning which is broadened by well-planned themed topics that give pupils wider experiences of their local and wider communities. These include links with a local Mosque and many opportunities to visit different places.
- The school's ethos is underpinned by good opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school maintains close links with the local community, and in particular with St Theresa's Catholic Church.
- The school makes very effective use of the additional funding it receives for sport by employing additional expertise to train teachers and to open up more sports and activities for pupils. There are many more planned activities in which pupils can participate and compete and the increased participation of girls shows the significant impact of this funding.
- The pupil premium funding is increasingly well spent. The school has put in place bespoke literacy and numeracy support, both in classrooms and as part of effective support activities to support the needs of these pupils. The school's latest assessment information shows that these pupils are making as much progress as other pupils in all year groups.
- The school works in a positive way with the local authority and welcomes the useful support and advice it receives.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance compared with that of school's nationally. They have a wide range of skills to support the school's work and receive appropriate training to stay up-to-date with developments in education. Governors increasingly

challenge school leaders and each governor takes responsibility for an aspect of the school's work. Governors have a good awareness of the quality of teaching and learning in the school and understand how the pupil premium is having an impact on the achievement of eligible pupils. Performance related pay reflects the achievement of pupils and the headteacher is set increasingly challenging targets matched to key areas for improvement. Governors ensure the school's financial health and that the school's arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements.

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	111388
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	439539

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	B Larkin
Headteacher	N Kirkman
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2009
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