

St Catherine's Hoddesdon CofE Primary School

Haslewood Avenue, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 8HT

Inspection dates 13–14 September 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management Good

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment Good

Personal development, behaviour and welfare Good

Outcomes for pupils Good

Early years provision Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The co-headteachers have a clear sense of purpose and are committed to raising standards within the school. They are highly ambitious for all pupils.
- Testament to the success of senior leaders and governors is the improved progress of pupils throughout the school.
- Teaching is now typically good across the range of subjects. Teachers plan interesting lessons that engage pupils in their learning.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. Progress in writing at the end of key stage 2 is above average.
- Pupils feel safe in school. School leaders ensure that all staff are appropriately trained in keeping pupils safe, and they meticulously follow statutory and school procedures.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- The school's curriculum makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Disadvantaged pupils receive effective support in helping them improve their reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, are making good progress and attainment is rapidly improving.
- Early years provision is good. As a result of good teaching children are enthusiastic learners and make good progress. They are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors provide the right level of support and challenge.
- Although provision for mathematics has improved, the recent improvements have not been in place long enough to accelerate progress, especially for the most able pupils.
- School leaders have not evaluated fully the impact of their actions in order to concentrate on the most effective strategies for reducing persistent absence.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the improved provision in mathematics in order to further accelerate progress, especially for the most able pupils.
- Evaluate the most effective interactions with families in order to determine and choose the most appropriate methods of improving the attendance of the small number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **Good**

- The co-headteachers have successfully raised standards within the school during an unsettled period. The high turnover of staff has presented many challenges. Successful management of this situation has made sure that teaching has led to improved achievement for most groups of pupils. The co-headteachers and governors have been relentless in making sure that only good teachers are appointed to the school. They rightly believe that pupils deserve the best possible teaching. At the time of the inspection the school was fully staffed.
- The co-headteachers, ably supported by the governors, provide a clear sense of direction for the school. Their openness and honesty when discussing aspects of their work is refreshing. Plans for future developments are focused on the right priorities and their evaluation of the school's current performance is accurate.
- All of the staff working in the school during the last inspection agree that the school has improved. The co-headteachers have the confidence of the staff, who share their vision of high aspirations for all pupils.
- Improvements in teaching are due to the rigorous checks that are carried out on the quality of teaching by senior and middle leaders. Leaders use a range of information, including data on pupil progress, to judge the quality of teaching. Where shortcomings are identified a training and support programme is put in place so that teaching improves quickly.
- Staff appraisal systems have improved. They now have a sharper focus on improving teachers' skills. Teachers only receive pay awards based on the quality of their performance.
- Training is closely linked to staff appraisal and school priorities. Teachers appreciate the quality of training they have received, especially from the Spiral Partnership Trust and local authority advisers. They told inspectors how valuable the training has been in improving their practice in the classroom.
- Middle leaders have a good understanding of the progress of pupils within their subject, the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, and pupil outcomes. The regular pupil progress meetings accurately identify pupils who may be falling behind in their learning. Middle leaders work closely with class teachers to make sure that pupils receive effective support so they quickly catch up.
- The school makes good use of the pupil premium funding to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The senior leader with oversight of the use of the funding has been rigorous in identifying the barriers to learning for pupils within this group. The impact of these strategies is carefully evaluated.
- The primary physical education and sports funding is used to provide high-quality sports lessons, clubs and activities. Pupils have the opportunity to learn a range of sports and all pupils learn to swim. Pupils participate in local sporting activities and take part in a range of sports clubs. This is having a positive impact on pupils' physical health and well-being.
- The local authority and a national leader of education have provided highly effective support for the school. Senior leaders have appreciated the support that they have received because it has helped them view their work objectively and validate their judgements. Inspectors agree with the local authority judgement that the school's leadership has the capacity to continue to improve the school.
- School leaders plan for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils exceptionally well. It is the 'thread' that is woven through all aspects of school life and is demonstrated in the school's values and strong ethos.
- The curriculum is well planned, ensuring that pupils are confident learners by the end of Year 6. Pupils study a range of subjects through interesting topics such as 'paws and claws', 'gods and mortals' and 'a child's war'. The curriculum is enriched by visits, speakers and trips. During the inspection Year 1 pupils were excited by visiting speakers from a local zoo who brought in a range of animals as part of their science learning. Pupils enjoy the range of after-school and lunchtime activities offered by the school.

Governance of the school

- As a result of an external review of their work and changes to the membership of the governing body, governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors provided effective strategic leadership and fulfil their statutory duties.
 - Governors possess a range of relevant skills and experiences. The chair of governors ensures that these are used to full effect. New governors undergo an induction programme and attend external training to ensure that they fully understand their role and can fulfil their responsibilities. All governors receive training on a regular basis.

- Governors understand pupil progress information and know how the school is performing in relation to other schools nationally. They ask pertinent and challenging questions about any dips in performance and about the quality of teaching. Governors ensure that the pupil premium and sports funding is spent appropriately to improve pupil outcomes.
- Regular visits to the school and reports from both governors and senior leaders enable governors to have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors ensure that pay awards are linked to the quality of teaching and the co-headteachers' appraisals are conducted appropriately. Governors are clear about their role and strike a good balance between supporting senior leaders and holding them to account.
- Governors take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. They ensure that all policies and procedures are up to date, and they carry out regular checks to ensure all pupils are safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school is meticulous in ensuring that staff carry out their safeguarding responsibilities. The appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers before they are allowed to work with the pupils. Staff receive regular up-to-date training in safeguarding and know what procedures to follow if they have concerns about a child.
- The governor with responsibility for safeguarding carries out termly checks to ensure that all adults have been appropriately checked. Over the past year, the school has been subject to annual local authority safeguarding review and health and safety audit. This and later reviews found the school to be fully compliant with regard to safeguarding procedures and judged health and safety practices to be outstanding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **Good**

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. The quality of learning is typically good because teachers have high expectations of pupils. They plan interesting and stimulating learning activities and as a result pupils enjoy learning.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. Pupils told inspectors that teachers expected them to 'always do their best'. They also said that teachers helped them if they didn't understand the work.
- Teachers have worked hard at developing pupils' resilience when presented with challenging activities. This is having a positive impact on the progress pupils make as they show a positive attitude towards demanding tasks. Pupils understand that making mistakes and giving incorrect answers helps them to learn. This was summed up by a small group of Year 2 pupils who told the inspectors 'It's OK to make mistakes as it makes your brain grow'.
- Inspectors saw evidence of highly effective questioning in a number of lessons. Teachers ask probing questions that help to deepen learning and develop understanding. As a result, the proportion of pupils making good progress across a range of subjects has improved.
- The teaching of writing is a strength within the school. This is because teachers plan learning activities that provide opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subjects other than English. Teachers select topics that interest pupils and stimulate their imagination. For example, Years 5 and 6 enjoyed using photographs linked to a battle scene to discuss the possible sights, sounds and atmosphere in each one. As a result, pupils produced thoughtful, descriptive sentences using a variety of adjectives, similes and metaphors in their war poems.
- Teachers apply the school's marking and feedback policy consistently. Pupils appreciate the guidance they are given about their strengths and the areas they need to develop in their work. Almost all pupils always make the necessary corrections to their work.
- Teaching assistants are very effective in supporting pupils' learning, working well in close partnership with teachers. Their skilful use of questioning and clear explanations ensure that pupils receiving support make good progress.
- Phonics teaching is strong. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it to plan activities that interest pupils. The letter sounds are systematically reinforced throughout the lessons, helping pupils to perfect their pronunciation.
- During the last inspection mathematics teaching was judged to be not providing enough challenge or

opportunities to develop pupils' mathematical thinking. Teachers are making good use of a recently adopted scheme to ensure there is a common structure to mathematics lessons and to provide good learning opportunities that develop pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills. Inspectors found some excellent examples of teachers providing pupils of all abilities with problem-solving activities that develop pupils' reasoning skills particularly well.

- There were also some excellent examples of pupils developing their reasoning skills, and high levels of challenge being provided for the most able.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **Good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They told inspectors they are safe because 'no one can get into the school grounds or building without being checked and because teachers look after us'. The overwhelming majority of parents and all staff agree that the school is safe.
- Pupils are confident and they are proud of their school. They value the opportunities they have to take on positions of responsibility such as school counsellor and membership of the collective worship team. Pupils who spoke to inspectors could not think of any way the school could be improved.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Pupils are very knowledgeable about internet safety because this is taught throughout the curriculum. Every classroom has posters reminding pupils how to keep safe online.
- Pupils told inspectors that they sometimes fall out and argue but repetitive bullying happens very occasionally. Older pupils are very clear about the difference between bullying and 'falling out'. Pupils say 'teachers always help us to sort out our disagreements', and they have confidence that teachers will deal with any incidents of bullying.
- This is a fully inclusive school where pupils are valued and taught to value others. Inspectors talked to pupils who had recently joined the school. They all agreed they had been welcomed by other pupils and soon made friends. A number of parents commented on the inclusiveness of the school. 'The children really seem to know and care for one another' represents a typical parent comment.
- All staff are committed to supporting those pupils who may be facing barriers to learning. The school works closely with external agencies and families to support these pupils. Parents expressed appreciation of the support provided by the school. This was summed up by the following parent's comment: 'I'm thoroughly content that my child's needs are being met by the school'.
- The school's breakfast and after-school club provides a safe environment for pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities and games.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour is good during break and lunchtime. They play well together, and pupils told the inspectors that they generally get on well together. They line up patiently in the dining room and display good manners when eating their meals.
- Pupils are enthusiastic learners and almost all concentrate well in lessons. Staff and pupils have high expectations regarding behaviour. Pupils' books indicate that they take pride in their work, as it is carefully presented. They are proud of their achievements.
- Pupils are very clear about the school's golden rules and the consequences if they fail to follow them. School records indicate that most instances of unacceptable behaviour are low-level.
- Results from the pupil questionnaire and from conversations with pupils indicate that most pupils feel that behaviour around the school and in lessons is good and that teachers encourage them to be friendly towards one another.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is above average, resulting in overall attendance being below average. Senior leaders, including governors, have introduced a number of strategies to improve attendance. This has resulted in an improvement in overall attendance for the last academic year, meeting the national average. School leaders are not evaluating the impact of the many strategies being used to improve attendance in order to choose those that are having the most impact. As a result, there is a minority of pupils whose attendance remains too low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school is successfully raising standards. As a result of improved teaching and careful tracking of pupil progress, pupils currently in the school are making good progress across a range of subjects, including science and humanities.
- In 2015 there was a dip in the proportion of pupils who met the threshold in the Year 1 phonics reading check. School leaders made a number of changes in the way phonics was taught, and as a result the proportion of pupils meeting the threshold is the highest achieved within the school.
- In 2015 pupils leaving key stage 2 having achieved the expected level of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above average. Pupils made good progress in reading and mathematics and excellent progress in writing.
- The standards of the 2016 national curriculum tests are higher than in previous years so it is not possible to compare results. However, unvalidated progress measures indicate that pupils made expected progress in reading and mathematics and exceeded it in writing.
- School information showing the progress of current pupils, and the quality of work seen in pupils' books, indicates that pupils are making good progress in both key stages 1 and 2. Teachers have higher expectations and provide opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. This has had a positive impact on improving writing across the school. Pupils are able to write for a range of purposes and use a range of grammatical techniques correctly.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils making good progress and meeting the expected standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2 equalled or exceeded that of other pupils nationally in 2015. At the time of the inspection this information was not available for the current year. Inspectors scrutinised the work in the books of disadvantaged pupils and looked at the school's progress information. This confirmed that disadvantaged pupils are continuing to make good progress.
- The most able disadvantaged pupils are supported well in their learning. Teachers have high expectations and set them more challenging tasks. Work in the pupils' books indicates that the most able pupils are now making rapid progress across a range of subjects.
- Pupils are developing their reading skills well. Support for pupils who need help with their reading is enabling them to improve understanding of books as they are able to use their phonics knowledge to work out unfamiliar words. The most able readers are confident, fluent readers who read with interest. Pupils enjoy reading, and read at home and in school.
- Careful assessment and monitoring ensures that pupils who have special education needs or disabilities receive tailored support both from teachers and teaching assistants. These pupils are making good progress.
- Historically, the most able pupils have not made sufficient progress to reach the higher attainment measures at the end of key stage 2. This has been an improvement focus for the school since the last inspection. Progress information and pupils' work indicate that a greater proportion of the most able pupils are making accelerated progress. This is because teachers are providing harder work that deepens their knowledge and skills. The school further develops the mathematical skills of the most able pupils in Year 6 by providing extra challenge through small-group teaching from a local secondary mathematics teacher.
- Evidence seen in pupils' books confirms that outcomes in mathematics are improving. However, this has not yet had an impact on the progress of the most able pupils and end of key stage 2 results.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join Reception from a variety of different pre-school settings. Frequent visits to meet the children in their pre-school and at home and good communication with parents enable teachers to plan activities that match the children's interests. Parents agree that their children are ready to start school. At the time of this inspection children were starting their first full day in Reception. Inspectors observed children enjoying their learning and settling into learning routines.
- All groups of children make good progress from their different starting points. Teachers, supported by teaching assistants, accurately assess children's skills and understanding when they enter Reception. Ongoing assessments allow staff to plan learning activities that meet the individual needs of pupils. The

proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development has improved since the last inspection. Most children leave Reception with the skills and knowledge that they need to be successful in Year 1.

- Disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs or disabilities are well supported in their learning. As a result, they make good progress. Transition arrangements for children who have special educational needs are very robust. Parents commented on how their child's transition allowed the child to progress smoothly into Reception.
- The outdoor area is spacious, very well equipped, secure and well supervised. It provides a rich environment for the children to learn from their own experiences and develop their physical skills.
- Adults provide a varied and engaging range of learning activities that enable pupils to develop their imagination, curiosity and social skills. Children make good use of both the indoor and outdoor learning areas to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of learning.
- There is a good balance of adult-led activities and activities chosen by the children. Adults use questioning effectively to develop children's understanding. Most of the time adults support children's language development well. They model correct pronunciations. However, inspectors noticed a few inconsistencies.
- Children behave well and play cooperatively with and alongside one another. Children respond quickly to adult instructions, listen carefully and show good levels of concentration.
- Children learn in a safe and nurturing environment. Adults take great care to keep children safe. They have been well trained in safeguarding procedures and are vigilant to the signs that a child may be at risk of harm.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The early years leader has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development.

School details

Unique reference number	133773
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10011856

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Falconbridge
Headteachers	Angela Wallis and Amanda Staiano
Telephone number	01992 462 3143
Website	www.stcaths.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stcaths.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-size primary school.
- The school is led by two co-headteachers. One works four days and week and the other works full time. They share the roles and responsibilities of headship.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities, or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The early years comprises two Reception classes. All pupils attend full time. The school manages the on-site before- and after-school club.
- Pupils are taught in single-aged classes in key stage 1. In key stage 2 they are taught in mixed-aged groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school receives support from the executive headteacher of the Spiral Partnership Trust, who is a national leader of education.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 18 lessons and made several shorter visits to classes to observe the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The co-headteachers of the school joined the inspectors for 10 of the observations. The inspectors also looked at work in pupils' books in lessons and conducted a work scrutiny to look at pupil progress in the last academic year. Inspectors listened to two groups of pupils read and talked to them about their reading. Inspectors visited two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with the co-headteachers, senior and middle leaders. Inspectors met with six governors. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the chair of governors.
- Discussions were also held with the national leader of education from the Spiral Partnership Trust and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school policies, safeguarding documents, pupil progress information and attendance data.
- Inspectors spoke informally with parents at the start and end of the school day and took note of their views. They also considered the 52 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 36 free text responses.
- Inspectors spoke formally to three groups of pupils. They also talked to pupils in lessons about their work, and spoke informally to pupils in the playground and dining hall.
- Analysis was undertaken of the inspection survey forms submitted by 14 members of staff and 63 pupils.

Inspection team

Caroline Parry, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Anna Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Tompkins	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016