

Pope Paul Catholic Primary School

Baker Street, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 2ES

Inspection dates	21–22 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This school has improved rapidly because senior leaders and governors provide highly effective leadership. They continuously drive improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Leaders and governors hold accurate views about the strengths of the school and remaining areas for development. They ensure that all improvement work is focused on these areas.
- Teaching and learning are good across the school. Teachers hold high expectations and plan interesting and challenging work for pupils of different abilities.
- Arrangements for checking on pupils' progress help teachers to adapt their teaching and support all pupils to learn well.
- Pupils in all year groups make good progress from their different starting points in English, mathematics and other subjects. There are no significant differences in the progress of any groups attending the school.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. They have exceptionally positive attitudes towards learning. Their attendance is above average. Staff provide excellent pastoral care to promote pupils' welfare.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well, and the well-developed curriculum helps pupils to become respectful and tolerant British citizens.
- Parents are closely involved in the life of the school and are now very supportive of the quality of education provided.
- Governors are highly effective. They are closely involved in the work of the school and provide a good balance of support and challenge.
- The quality of education in the early years is good. Good leadership, teaching and learning enable children to make good progress. Their behaviour is outstanding and they are kept safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers sometimes fail to check on pupils' understanding of the most challenging work in English and mathematics. Consequently, some pupils of average ability make slower progress because their knowledge is not secure.
- In the early years, the outdoor learning environment is not sufficiently developed to support all children to thoroughly develop their practical learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Support the progress of pupils of average ability in mathematics and English, by making sure that teachers thoroughly assess their understanding of higher mathematical concepts and writing skills, so that they are clear about how to use them in calculations, problem solving and written work.
- Improve the early years outdoor learning environment so that pupils are able to experience a full range of well-developed learning activities which are as effective as the best provided in the classroom.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and governors have brought about significant improvements since the previous inspection. The newly appointed headteacher has continued to drive the school forward with determination and success. She and her capable senior team share a clear vision of high expectations for teaching, pupils' achievement and personal development. These aims are communicated effectively to staff and parents.
- Parental opinion is very positive about the improvements made since the previous inspection. Leaders, teachers and governors have worked successfully to consult with and fully involve parents in the life and work of the school.
- Leaders and governors actively seek advice from high-performing schools, as well as from advisers within the local authority and the diocese. As a result, they are able to review their own work effectively and develop their ideas for improvement. Local authority advisers have been effective in providing challenge and support for leaders, particularly in teaching, assessment and the development of the curriculum. Leaders have made very effective use of this advice to continue their improvement work.
- Leaders' self-evaluation work is very accurate and offers a clear picture of the school's strengths and remaining areas for development. Strategic planning is carefully focused on these areas. Arrangements for checking on the progress of improvement work are thorough, and involve all leaders and governors.
- Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and assessing their learning are effective. Teachers' assessments are accurate and carried out consistently. Leaders set challenging targets for pupils and regular checks are made to ensure that they are on track to reach them. As a result, pupils are well supported and helped if they are at risk of falling behind, and parents are well informed about their progress, owing to effective reporting arrangements.
- Teachers follow the school's marking policy consistently, and most pupils are able to use the advice they are given in order to improve their work and clear up any misunderstandings.
- Senior leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching. They visit lessons frequently, look at pupils' work and meet regularly with teachers in order to review pupils' progress. They use the findings to provide effective training courses and coaching support, which are valued by staff. For example, all teachers have worked together to improve their subject knowledge as the new national curriculum has been introduced. This has led to them making learning more challenging for pupils.
- Performance management arrangements for teachers' salary progression are rigorous and effective, and pay awards are based on teachers' performance.
- Subject leaders have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and undertake them effectively. They receive high-quality training and are skilled in reviewing pupils' progress and the quality of their work. As a result, they are able to advise teachers on how to improve their planning and teaching activities. They cooperate with other schools on a range of improvement activities, and have led local authority teaching networks for developing the assessment of subjects in the new national curriculum, including science.
- Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding so that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to that of other pupils nationally and within school. They have organised a range of strategies and additional resources, personally matched to each pupil. The use of this additional funding is tracked closely so that leaders are confident about its success.
- Leaders' use of the primary sports premium funding is highly effective. Development planning and checks on the results of spending are thorough. Staff receive high-quality training from sports coaches to improve their confidence in teaching competitive games, and leaders have improved the range of equipment available for pupils to use. As a consequence of these improvements, pupils' participation in school clubs and competitive team sports has increased significantly.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to provide depth and an effective balance of subjects which support pupils' achievement and personal development. All leaders make sure that numeracy skills are well taught in different subjects, including computer work, history, geography and sciences. There is a strong focus on core English and communication skills so that pupils have the opportunity to read and write for different purposes in subjects including religious education, the humanities and sciences. Extra-curricular activities are well developed through a range of clubs, competitive sports and trips.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well, both through the curriculum and the very wide range of extra-curricular activities. A highly effective religious education curriculum gives the children a thorough knowledge of Christianity and a well-developed understanding of other faiths and traditions. Pupils of different faiths are encouraged to share them at school and all children visit mosques, synagogues and temples in order to learn about how

other British citizens worship and what they believe. High-quality teaching encourages pupils to reflect deeply on searching, moral questions.

- Pupils receive highly effective preparation for life in modern Britain. The school's mission prayer reflects the British values of mutual respect, tolerance and personal responsibility, and pupils are able to explain what these things mean. Many volunteer for positions of responsibility, including community service, while others make decisions about the charitable work of the school. Pupils' understanding and commitment to parliamentary democracy is thoroughly developed through the decision-making work of the school's active and fully elected 'parliament'.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are an effective and experienced body of leaders who are closely involved in the life of the school. They take their responsibilities very seriously and are highly committed. They have a particularly effective understanding of teaching, assessment and curriculum development, and are closely involved in the school's strategic improvement plan and arrangements for checking on its progress. They visit frequently, ask detailed questions about performance, and work productively with leaders who are responsible for the different areas. As a result, they are well informed about the effectiveness of the school, which allows them to offer an appropriate balance of support and challenge.
 - Governors are well informed about their statutory duties. For example, the governor with specific responsibilities for safeguarding ensures that all requirements are met, policies are reviewed and that staff receive relevant training.
 - Governors are very well informed about, and can explain, the effectiveness of the school's use of additional funding, including how it supports disadvantaged children and how it develops pupils' participation in competitive sports. They are clearly aware of how performance management arrangements work, and ask relevant questions when considering salary recommendations.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff are trained in all areas of their statutory duties and receive updated training to remind them of how to act on any concerns. Arrangements for checking on the suitability of staff to be employed are effective, and visitors' access to the school is carefully managed. Pupils are offered effective advice and guidance on keeping safe, and parents approve. The work of leaders who act as the designated safeguarding leads is very thorough. As a result, the school is able to ensure that children who are vulnerable or at risk receive effective and timely support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection and teaching is typically good.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive and make a substantial contribution to learning. Teachers set very high expectations for pupils' effort and support them to meet the standards expected by encouraging them to grow in confidence and to try hard with challenging work.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very thorough as a result of effective professional development. They plan activities and work which are interesting and sufficiently challenging for pupils of different abilities. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson about the areas of complex shapes and patterns, the teacher provided suitably difficult calculation work for the most able pupils, as well as the rest of the class. As a result, all the pupils were able to develop their understanding to a sufficient depth.
- Teachers use questioning well to challenge pupils to think carefully and use their knowledge to develop their answers thoroughly. This was seen in a Year 5 religious education lesson about 'The good Samaritan'. Pupils' ideas about the meaning of the story were shared across the class. As a result, pupils were able to draw deeper conclusions about the purpose of parables in teaching important lessons, as well as the meaning of the story they were studying.
- Teaching assistants are highly effective. They work closely with teachers to ensure that they meet the needs of those pupils they support, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have a thorough knowledge of pupils' needs because teachers carefully plan their activities with them. Staff are particularly skilled in questioning and discussion techniques, which help pupils to remain focused on their work. As a result of this additional help, the pupils they support learn well.
- Reading is taught well and pupils are provided with well-selected books which are suitably challenging. They are able to demonstrate clear understanding of the texts they are given to read and can infer what writers mean when they write in a particular way. They are also able to offer accurate views about the

characters in a story and the direction of the plot. Pupils read every day in school, and homework supplements this. Additional reading sessions, including appropriate support, are available for pupils who require extra help.

- Pupils are taught to write effectively. The curriculum is carefully planned to support them to develop their writing skills in different subjects, including English, religious education, history, geography and science. Teachers use a wide range of strategies and resources to support pupils to carefully plan and draft their written work. Pupils are skilled in editing their work and checking on the accuracy of their grammar, spelling and punctuation. For example, Year 5 pupils use dictionaries to check on the spelling of critical connective words and select more sophisticated words by using thesauruses accurately.
- Mathematics is taught well. Teachers plan a wide range of activities which support younger pupils to secure their knowledge of number rules and use them with increasing confidence and fluency. Older pupils are provided with a range of increasingly challenging, problem-solving activities to help them apply their calculation and reasoning skills.
- Teachers set homework regularly using accessible online resources which allow parents to be kept informed of what their children are studying and how they can become more closely involved in supporting them. As a result, parental support for the school's use of homework is rapidly increasing, and parents reported their approval of it to inspectors.
- When introducing new knowledge or setting the most challenging work in English and mathematics, teachers sometimes fail to properly check that pupils thoroughly understand what is being explained to them. Consequently, some pupils of average ability make slower progress because they lack a proper understanding of the work and how to tackle it.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very happy, courteous and friendly. They are very respectful of one another and offer the same level of respect to all their teachers and visitors. All pupils follow the values contained within the school's mission prayer, which guides them to value, care for and respect all people so they can become their best.
- Pupils make a significant contribution to the life of their school. One example is the very active and respected school parliament, which is a fully elected, decision-making pupil body. Members are highly articulate about the value of democracy and how rules are made or changed. They are also able to explain how they have changed things for the better. They are very positive about the opportunities they have to meet with leaders and discuss their parliament's work.
- Pupils are highly committed to supporting people within their community and overseas, through charity events which raise money for Mission and Catholic Fund for Overseas Development.
- Pupils are highly supportive of each other. They are highly cooperative in lessons, show patience and respect when working together, and listen courteously when others are speaking. One example was seen in a Year 1 writing lesson where pupils eagerly helped each other to use their senses to describe how they would feel if a dragon arrived in their classroom.
- Public performance skills are well developed. Pupils are provided with high-quality musical education from an early age, particularly in classical instruments, and their choral achievements have led to national recognition.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils are safe and happy in school. Parents strongly agree. Pupils report that they can approach the school with confidence about any concern and effective action is taken.
- Pupils believe that bullying of any sort is extremely rare and parents agree that the school's work in this area is highly effective.
- The school's work to keep pupils free from harm when using communication technology is highly effective, and leaders and teachers provide regular advice and guidance for parents as well. As a result, pupils are very aware of how to avoid risks when using the internet, email, computer games and age-appropriate social media.
- Pupils are well educated in staying healthy. The curriculum ensures that they are given advice about respectful relationships and a healthy diet, and that they receive plenty of physical exercise and experience of competitive sports. Pupils also enjoy a healthy balanced diet at lunchtimes owing to the carefully planned menu.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Leaders, teachers and governors promote very high expectations for behaviour, and pupils take full responsibility for their behaviour and conduct. The very youngest children in the Reception class are quickly helped to learn what is expected in a caring and supportive way, and they quickly settle in and make the right choices. Older pupils share teachers' understanding of why the highest standards of good behaviour and effort are so important
- Pupils' attitudes in lessons are very positive and they are highly committed towards learning. They are also very confident and they do not give up when work is difficult. They take great pride in the quality of their work and presentation standards are consistently high.
- Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well and demonstrate very high levels of self-discipline. They move around the school very calmly and sensibly, and are considerate to one another and adults when opening doors and using stairways. They wait their turn patiently in the lunch queue and are polite to kitchen staff. In the dining hall, they eat their food very sensibly.
- Pupils fully respect and enjoy their learning environment and the extensive school grounds. They enjoy their opportunities to play and socialise during breaktimes and lunch, and look after each other. They do not drop litter and they use the play equipment sensibly. Inside school, displays are also in good condition and pupils avoid damaging them when moving around.
- Lessons are always calm and purposeful. Pupils behave very well and any instances of mild off-task behaviour are quickly resolved by a simple reminder from their teachers.
- Pupils' extremely positive attitudes towards school are demonstrated by their attendance which is above average and rising. Persistent absence has also been reduced, including the absence of small numbers of disadvantaged pupils and those whose attendance has been lower than others in the past. Leaders, and staff responsible for attendance, work effectively with families to communicate the value of high attendance. Their approaches to improving it are highly successful.
- Permanent exclusion is extremely rare, and fixed-term exclusions are very low, as are any of the types of incidents which would warrant exclusion.
- The vast majority of parents consistently agree that the school ensures that behaviour is of a high standard, and leaders promote it very well.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- There has been a substantial improvement in the progress made by pupils since the previous inspection, and across the school they are making good progress in a wide range of subjects. They are building on their previous learning and developing secure subject knowledge, understanding and skills in mathematics, reading and writing. There are no significant differences in the progress of any groups of pupils.
- Children in the early years make a good start at school. Most children currently in the school joined with skills that are lower than those typical for their age, particularly in reading, writing and number knowledge. However, they have made good progress, and the large majority are reaching a good level of development. They are well prepared for entry to Year 1.
- The proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics (the sounds that letters make) reading check have risen steadily since 2014 and were firmly above average in 2015. This represented a clear improvement on previous performance. Visits to phonics lessons, listening to children read and the school's accurate assessment information show that there are no significant gaps in the current progress that different groups of pupils are making, and standards are still rising. Pupils have been taught effectively and use their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words accurately.
- Pupils' progress in key stage 1 has improved sharply. In 2015, pupils' standards were significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics, representing good progress from their starting points in the early years. Pupils' work and their assessment records show that pupils currently in key stage 1 are making good progress, and in Year 2 both boys and girls are likely to exceed the expectations for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Progress in key stage 2 is good and represents substantial improvement. In 2015, attainment was firmly above average in reading, writing and mathematics, and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. The results represented exceptional progress in reading, and good progress overall from their different starting points in writing and mathematics. The school's tracking information and work completed by pupils currently in Years 3 to 5 show that they are making good progress, representing an important

improvement for Year 5 whose results represented underachievement in national tests in 2013. However, pupils' work and visits to lessons show that occasionally pupils of average ability are not sufficiently securing their knowledge and skills in the most challenging areas of learning. This prevents them from making the highest levels of progress. The great majority of Year 6 pupils are on course to meet at least age-related expectations.

- There are very few disadvantaged pupils currently at the school and this makes a meaningful comparison between their progress and others nationally very difficult. However, taking account of their individual starting points, their assessment records and their work, they are making good progress and there are no significant gaps apparent between their progress and others nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress when compared with other pupils with similar starting points. This is because they receive challenging targets, are assessed accurately and receive highly effective support to access learning in lessons.
- The work of the most able pupils and the school's tracking information show that they are making good progress and achieving higher than age-expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Records and work for Year 6 show that the previous gap between mathematics and other subjects has been reduced as a result of improvements to mathematics teaching.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. High-quality teaching supports them to acquire a secure range of English skills at an early stage. Published results, pupils' work and current assessment information show they are making progress which is as good as other pupils nationally.
- Pupils are also making good progress across a range of other subjects, such as singing, science, music, history, geography, religious education and computing.

Early years provision

is good

- Good leadership is ensuring that all children are making good progress in all areas of learning. The school's accurate assessment information shows that children entered the Reception Year with knowledge and skills lower than those typical for their age, particularly in reading, writing and use of numbers. However, leaders organise teaching effectively and ensure that boys and girls are achieving equally well. As a result, children make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Assessment arrangements are accurate and effective from the beginning of the Reception Year. Parents contribute to initial assessments, and teachers also take account of pupils' progress in nurseries and pre-schools. Teachers use this information to set challenging targets and to make arrangements which support children to quickly settle into school.
- Teachers provide a rich and exciting variety of activities and work to stimulate children's learning. As a result, children are supported in using the classroom and outdoor learning environments to develop imagination and make good progress. In a reading and spelling lesson, children were given a choice of activities linked to the tale of *The gingerbread man* which included writing a poem or designing a trap to catch him. They made good progress, extending their vocabulary by selecting from a list of suitable key words, and being able to explain their design work.
- Monitoring arrangements are highly effective, and teachers quickly adjust activities and work to make sure that any gaps in knowledge are closed. For example, children have consolidated their spelling skills because leaders have carefully tracked their progress in phonics and spelling, and teaching has ensured that all children have had sufficient help to close any gaps in their knowledge.
- Children are very keen to participate in learning activities. They show confidence in number work when, for example, counting or using dominoes to identify patterns and help them count. They also thoroughly enjoy identifying words as real or false during phonics sessions.
- Children's behaviour and safety are outstanding. They are very eager to cooperate with adults and each other. Their social development is exceptional and they are sensible and well behaved at all times. Staff set very high expectations for good manners, which children clearly display.
- The classroom environment is attractive, tidy, safe and well organised for learning. It features a wide range of practical equipment, helpful displays and celebrations of children's work and achievements. The outdoor environment is currently less well developed, which prevents the children from making progress which is as good as the best seen in the classroom area.

School details

Unique reference number	117496
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10011834

This inspection 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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marybelle Morrissey
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Liz Heymoz
Telephone number	01707659755
Website	www.popepaul.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@popepaul.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 June 2014

Information about this school

- Pope Paul Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils attend classes in single-age groups as well as combining pupils of different abilities.
- The school is part of the Catholic Diocese of Westminster.
- The majority of pupils are White British, and the proportion from ethnic minorities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, and the proportion supported by a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is very low.
- The numbers of pupils supported by funding known as the pupil premium is low. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after.
- At the time of the inspection, the current headteacher had been in post for around 10 weeks. Prior to this, she had worked in the school as deputy headteacher for several years.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 14 lessons and part-lessons, three of them with senior leaders.
- They examined samples of pupils' work from a range of subjects including reading, writing, mathematics, history, geography, religious education and science. They also listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan, records of governors' work, safeguarding policies and procedures, visit notes from education advisers, records of behaviour and attendance figures.
- They held meetings with senior leaders, the local authority improvement partners, subject leaders and the special educational needs and early years leaders. They also met with children from Year 3 to Year 6 to discuss their experience at the school and their learning from different subjects. They also took account of the views of 30 children to the online questionnaire, Learner View.
- Inspectors met formally with a small number of parents and also met others at the entrance to the school. Inspectors took account of 90 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 65 parental comments. They also took account of the views of 16 staff who completed a questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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