

St Adrian's Roman Catholic Primary School

Watling View, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 2PB

Inspection dates

19–20 October 2016

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| 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 |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders and governors have effectively addressed the issues raised at the previous inspection with conviction and determination. As a result, teaching and pupils' achievement have improved rapidly and are good.
- Governors are committed to and ambitious for the future of the school. They provide highly effective support and appropriate challenge to school leaders.
- Staff morale is high, resulting in a shared drive and vision that ensures that pupils achieve well from their different starting points.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 is at least in line with national expectations and improving rapidly.
- Pupils benefit from teaching that is mostly securely good across subjects and year groups. Some aspects of the teaching of reading are weaker.
- Leaders use accurate information on how well pupils are doing to identify who needs extra support, which is then provided swiftly and effectively.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are strong. As a result, pupils enjoy school, take more risks in their learning, and work hard to succeed.
- The school has excellent relationships with parents, who feel very well informed and are overwhelmingly supportive.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is exemplary. The school is a calm and orderly environment where pupils work and play harmoniously together.
- Pupils demonstrate a well-developed understanding of, and consideration for, the plights and rights of other people, both in this country and around the world.
- Good teaching and learning enables children in the early years to make good progress.
- Expectations of what all pupils can achieve are high. Teachers accurately assess pupils' achievements and so activities are well matched to pupils' varying needs.
- Different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress because of the effective support they receive. Disadvantaged pupils do as well as other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Arrangements for keeping children safe are well managed and very effective. Pupils told inspectors that they felt safe in school and well cared for by the adults who work there.
- Subject leaders are increasingly effective in improving the curriculum and checking information on how well pupils are doing. However, they do not yet take full responsibility for improving the quality of teaching in their areas.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - developing the skills of subject leaders in monitoring progress and leading improvements in the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make rapid progress by:
 - ensuring that activities to improve reading challenge all groups of pupils to develop their understanding of what they read
 - providing more opportunities for less confident readers to read to an adult in school so that they improve their fluency and understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are a highly effective team and have united and inspired staff in the drive to improve outcomes for their pupils. Senior leaders have created an inclusive and supportive culture which considers the needs of each pupil individually as well as challenging both staff and pupils to give their best at all times.
- High expectations of pupils' behaviour are shared by all staff. Pupils support these expectations and say that teachers are consistent in the way they use reward systems and sanctions to manage behaviour. The result is a happy school where learning can flourish and relationships are positive.
- Senior leaders have established a sharp focus on raising standards and strengthening teaching. This is closely monitored and support is given to teachers whose practice needs to improve. New, more rigorous systems to manage the performance of teachers take into account their classroom practice as well as how effective they are in other aspects of their jobs, such as leading a subject area. Judgements of teachers' effectiveness include consideration of the progress pupils make in their lessons.
- Senior leaders have invested in their staff by providing teachers with the time to work together to plan activities and share good practice. Teachers are, therefore, motivated and keen to improve; consequently, teaching is improving strongly. Teachers benefit from many opportunities to develop their skills through training that is tailored closely to their needs.
- Information on how well pupils are doing in each of their subjects is collected regularly and analysed rigorously to identify those who may need extra support to catch up. Staff are becoming more skilled at using this kind of information to help them quickly identify misconceptions in learning so that this can be addressed before gaps develop in their pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Governors together with senior leaders have evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately. They know what needs to be done to ensure that pupils in all year groups make improved progress to further raise standards.
- The curriculum is varied and well designed to meet the needs of all pupils. Opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their extended writing skills have been carefully woven across all subject areas. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and are very keen to talk about the topics they are studying. Subjects such as music are also valued and promoted well, with, for example, Year 6 pupils providing music in assemblies throughout the year.
- The school uses the sports premium for primary schools effectively to increase the opportunities for pupils to participate in a wider range of sporting activities and competitive sport. The use of a sports assistant has extended the number of sports on offer at after-school clubs and so attendance is increasing. Pupils enjoy physical education and make good progress. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils were able to successfully develop their catching skills because activities were effectively designed to challenge pupils of all abilities.
- Other opportunities that extend the curriculum beyond the school day include a yoga

club and, following a request by the school council, a very popular and oversubscribed cookery club run by the school cook.

- The school promotes fundamental British values strongly. For example, pupils have to win the votes of their peers to be on the school council. They explained to inspectors that being voted for is important because it means that the best people get chosen for the roles. An understanding of different religious and cultural beliefs is developed through the comprehensive religious education curriculum. Pupils celebrate the fact that their school has a growing number of children and staff with different national and cultural heritages and told inspectors that it makes them a more interesting community. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are promoted effectively, preparing them positively for life in modern Britain.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are confident that their children are safe at school, are well taught and are making progress. A large number of parents attended the Harvest festival assembly which took place during the inspection and parents spoke of how they always feel welcome and listened to by teachers. Many had visited their children's lessons on days when classrooms are open to parents and feel well informed by regular newsletters and progress updates.
- The local authority has provided effective support for the school which has contributed significantly to the improvements in teaching and outcomes. Senior leaders have used the expertise of the local authority advisers wisely. For example, they have provided helpful support to individual subject leaders as they develop their leadership skills, as well as in the key areas of English and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported at the school. An effective team assesses the needs of each pupil and strategies are put in place to ensure improved progress. Information provided by the school and observations by inspectors show that these interventions have ensured that pupils make good progress in their personal development and in their learning.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to promote the well-being and achievement of all disadvantaged pupils. Very small numbers make comparisons with other pupils nationally unreliable. Nevertheless, each pupil has an individual programme of support and their progress is very well monitored. Extra support in reading, writing and mathematics provided by a qualified teacher has ensured that these pupils make good progress.
- Subject leaders plan well and provide training and support for all teachers. As a result, there is more consistency in what and how pupils are taught. However, subject leaders are not yet held fully to account for the quality of teaching and progress in their areas of responsibility.

Governance of the school

- The knowledgeable and active members of the governing body bring a wealth of experience, such as finance and education, to their roles. They understand the school very well, evaluating accurately the strengths of the school and the areas where it can improve. They carry out a wide range of monitoring visits, including looking at the quality of pupils' work. Link governors meet regularly with subject leaders in order to monitor specific aspects of the school's work and report back in detail to the full governing body.
- Governors provide very effective support and challenge to the school. They responded decisively to address the issues found at the previous inspection. They have a clear

understanding of the assessment information that is available to the school and use it to check how well all groups of pupils are achieving.

- Governors are ambitious for the school and are determined that achievement will continue to rise. They hold the headteacher to account for the school's development through regular reviews of the performance data. They know where the strengths and relative weaknesses lie in teaching and manage the performance of all staff appropriately, using pay increments to reward effective performance. Governors manage the school's finances and resources effectively and measure the impact of spending, including the pupil premium and sports funding, on pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are very effective. Leaders and governors with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that it is regarded as a high priority within the school. Leaders have created a safeguarding culture where pupils' well-being is a major priority and pupils are taught to look out for each other and care about what happens to others. All staff receive regular training and know how to identify pupils who might be at risk of exploitation. Policies are regularly updated and paperwork is detailed and robust. Effective relationships with parents and outside agencies ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are well met.
- The school's curriculum teaches pupils how to manage some of risks they face in modern society, including raising their awareness of how they can be influenced by others and keeping safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good and continues to improve. For example, the teaching of mathematics, highlighted as an area for improvement at the previous inspection, is now good. Where mathematics teaching is strongest, pupils are challenged to deepen their understanding of the concepts they are learning. Well-planned activities also allow time for pupils to master new skills and practise applying them in different situations so that they understand the purpose of what they are learning.
- The teaching of phonics has been strengthened. This year saw an end to the three-year decline in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. Current pupils in Year 1 were reviewing 'oi' words in their phonics sessions, with extra challenge provided for the most able pupils with words such as 'poison'. When Year 3 pupils read to inspectors, they were effectively applying the phonics skills they had learned at key stage 1 to sound out unfamiliar words.
- Teachers routinely encourage pupils to work things out for themselves through carefully designed activities and skilful questioning. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils embraced the challenge of working with their partners to come up with an answer to a problem using a method of their own choice. Wrong answers were used by the teacher as an opportunity to learn. Here, pupils worked out why their answer was wrong and received praise not only from the teacher but also from their peers.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils adheres to the school's marking policy. Teachers ensure that pupils are always clear about what they are learning and why.
- Information from teachers about how well pupils are doing is thorough and detailed. Where practice is strongest, it provides staff and parents with a very clear picture of how well each child is progressing. It is also used to inform planning to ensure that all

children are challenged and so make good progress. Teachers match tasks closely to the abilities of pupils and use questioning to engage learners and make them think.

- The school has identified that, although outcomes in reading have improved, this is an area that needs more development. The quality of guided reading sessions observed during the inspection was inconsistent. In a few classes, pupils were not challenged by the activities. Teaching assistants working with small groups of pupils were most effective when they had clear direction from the teacher on the purpose of the activities they were engaged in. At best, well-planned activities engaged pupils in lively discussion about what they were reading and this good practice needs to be shared with all teachers.
- Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to read aloud and independently across the curriculum. However, pupils told inspectors that they rarely have opportunities to read with an adult in school one to one and so their reading does not always develop as quickly as it could.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils clearly demonstrated their positive attitudes during the inspection by the way they behave towards each other both in lessons and around the school. Pupils new to the school are welcomed by existing pupils so they make new friends quickly.
- Pupils are given time for reflection and prayer during the day and are mindful of those less fortunate than themselves. They are taught about issues such as homelessness, political prisoners and poverty. They fundraise for both local and international charities.
- In many lessons, particularly at key stage 2, pupils show the confidence to embrace failure, telling inspectors that getting things wrong is good if you learn something from it. Pupils in a Year 3 mathematics class enthusiastically stood in front of their peers and explained how they had arrived at their answers. They showed resilience when they were wrong, accepting challenge and correction from their peers because it was delivered in a supportive and collaborative way. This attitude to learning contributes to the rapidly improving rates of progress.
- Pupils also manage their own behaviour well at break times. They play and socialise together in groups that mix age groups and gender and burn off any excess energy on the play equipment or by playing complicated chasing games around the field. Following this, they then adapt their behaviour quickly back to meet classroom expectations as they respond promptly to the bell.
- Pupils at the school feel safe and know how to stay safe. They talk confidently on issues such as how to stay safe on the internet and how to look after themselves by making healthy lifestyle choices. The school approaches concerns such as the dangers of radicalisation by teaching the values of tolerance and openness. In their English lessons, Year 5 pupils were debating the value of free speech and learning how to listen to and consider an opinion different to their own.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Around the building, behaviour is impeccable,

with pupils showing great consideration for each other, their teachers and other adults. Lunchtimes are calm and orderly and pupils treat facilities such as the dining hall respectfully and keep the school free from litter. They wear their uniforms with pride.

- Pupils' excellent behaviour in lessons contributed strongly to their learning. Even on the few occasions when pupils' interest was not engaged by the activities provided by the teacher, they tried their best to concentrate and complete them. Pupils told inspectors that their learning is rarely, if ever, disturbed by the behaviour of others. The high expectations of both teachers and pupils make a positive contribution to the exceptionally strong climate for learning in the school.
- Pupils showed a mature understanding of what bullying is, the different types of bullying and how it can affect people. School records show that very little bullying happens at school but that, when it does, it is quickly dealt with. Pupils supported this, saying that they were confident that teachers would take them seriously if they reported anything and take action to put things right. Parents agree that their children are safe and happy at the school.
- The attendance of all groups of pupils is above the national average and persistent absence is well below the national average. Pupils enjoy school and do not like to miss their time in lessons or with their friends.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Standards have improved since the last inspection. From their varied individual starting points, pupils across all year groups make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Some make exceptionally good progress.
- The work in pupils' books, current in-school assessment information and other inspection evidence confirms that pupils make good progress across a wide range of subjects. As well as extending their knowledge of science, geography and history, for example, pupils also apply their literacy skills to extended pieces of writing in these areas.
- In both 2014 and 2015, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception increased. Provisional information for 2016 shows a small decline, especially for boys, although standards are still above those for other children nationally.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level by the end of Year 2 was similar to national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. From strong starting points in Year 1, this did not represent good progress. Unconfirmed information for 2016 shows that more pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils nationally did. Figures for those exceeding this in mathematics and writing are also above national averages.
- The proportion of pupils who met the required standard in phonics declined in 2015, and boys did much better than girls. The 2016 provisional information shows that this has improved and 90% of pupils have met the required standard, which is above national expectations. There is now little difference in the achievement of boys and girls. This is because children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 receive good-quality phonics teaching which is well matched to their different needs.
- By the time they reach the end of Year 6, most pupils achieve better outcomes in the key stage 2 tests than their peers nationally. However, the 2015 results showed that,

from their starting points at the end of key stage 1, pupils' progress was slower than that of pupils in other schools. Leaders analysed the reasons for this and swiftly took action to address this underachievement. As a result, the provisional results for 2016 show that pupils made strong progress, particularly in mathematics and writing.

- Provisional scores in the end of the key stage 2 mathematics tests demonstrate how the teaching of mathematics has improved in the school since the previous inspection. In particular, the average progress made by pupils exceeds that of other schools nationally.
- The small numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good and sometimes better progress. Staff are well trained in assessing their needs and providing the right support. Provision is carefully mapped and checked.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress, sometimes at a faster rate than other pupils nationally. Because of small numbers, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils varies year on year and it is not helpful to compare cohorts. They do well because the funding for these pupils provides additional support and resources which are matched closely to their needs, including those who are most able.
- The most able pupils make good progress, especially in mathematics and writing, because teachers have high expectations of what they are capable of and plan activities which challenge them.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children join nursery with skills which are broadly typical for their age. They make rapid progress in the nursery and reception classes and by the end of the Reception Year the proportion reaching a good level development is above the national average. Children are extremely well prepared to start Year 1.
- Children settle very rapidly and quickly become confident because the systems, routines and expectations in the early years are well defined. Children are encouraged to be independent, helping one another with activities and tasks, and confidently exploring resources.
- Good practice in assessing children's understanding enables the team to accurately establish children's starting points on entry to the school. Staff use this information to continually check that children are making enough progress towards the early learning goals. For example, having identified that children's physical development was not as advanced as other areas, teachers created activities to encourage them to improve their motor skills and their movement. In 'funky fingers' activities, children patiently worked out how to hang or link paper clips. Movement to music showed children developing an awareness of how to create a safe space in which to 'shake and move'. Consequently, the proportion of children achieving a good level of physical development by the end of Reception has increased.
- Leaders and adults have high expectations of the children, including of their behaviour. Consequently, children behave well, learn how to share and take turns very well because these are consistently modelled by adults. For example, the teacher routinely thanks the children for taking part in activities, and this politeness is echoed by the children when they speak to each other and to the adults in the room. Relationships are highly positive. Children are kept safe because all staff closely adhere to procedures and risk assessments.

- Parents are involved in their child's learning from the outset. They are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning and there are regular opportunities for parents to find out how well their child is doing. Parents are highly positive about the experience their children have in the early years.
- Leadership of the early years is new and developing. Senior leaders and the local authority provide strong support to ensure that the provision meets the needs of the children. As a result, the curriculum they are offered is rich and balanced and their learning area is well set up to provide a stimulating environment that captures children's interest. Best use is made of the outdoor learning environment to provide children with ample opportunities to explore and extend their skills.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117470 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10019603 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 234 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Richard Belt |
| Headteacher | Yvonne Hawkes |
| Telephone number | 01727852687 |
| Website | www.stadrians.herts.sch.uk |
| Email address | head@stadrians.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 13–14 November 2014 |

Information about this school

- St Adrian's is an average-sized primary school with one class in each year group.
- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is average and a small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in every class across a range of subjects.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' books, listened to them read, and talked with different groups of pupils about their lessons and school life.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' progress and the management of the school, including the arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Inspectors took account of the 114 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke with parents as they collected their children from school. The views of staff were also considered, through the 17 responses to an Ofsted questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lesley Daniel, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Liz Kissane

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