

St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School

Kensington Drive, Higher Folds, Leigh, WN7 2YG

Inspection dates

21–22 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because pupils' achievement is uneven across the school.
- Pupil progress information is not always used to plan lessons that challenge all pupils well enough, particularly the more able.
- Some lessons move too slowly and pupils who are not fully engaged in what they are learning lose interest and become distracted.
- The curriculum focuses heavily on developing literacy and numeracy skills and does not always provide opportunities for pupils to be creative or responsible for their own learning.
- Senior leaders have introduced a wide range of actions to improve standards. However, they have not yet checked carefully enough that they are all having a positive effect on pupils' progress.
- New methods of managing teachers' performance have been introduced. However, they are not yet closely linked to improving pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders are not yet fully involved in leading their subject or area of responsibility.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have successfully amalgamated two schools.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching across the school.
- Pupils achieve well in some classes, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils behave very well in and around the school.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for; they like their teachers and feel that they help them to learn.
- The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- The new headteacher has high ambitions for the school and she enjoys the full support and confidence of pupils, parents, staff and governors.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a local authority representative and school staff.
- The inspectors took account of responses to the school's parental questionnaire. There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be recorded.
- A range of documents were looked at, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing and the improvement plan, pupil progress information, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of committee meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. The inspectors also examined work in pupils' books.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gary Kelly

Additional Inspector

Mark Hilton

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided for children in local authority care, those from services families and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above average.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average.
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs are well above average.
- The school has amalgamated with another school since the last inspection and is based on a split site.
- The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher took up their posts in September 2012.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, so that pupils make consistently good or better progress by:
 - using school pupil progress information and teachers' assessment of learning to plan lessons that match the learning needs of all pupils, especially the more able
 - making sure that lessons move quickly enough and are engaging enough to keep pupils interested and involved.
- Further develop the curriculum by:
 - providing a greater variety of experiences
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - making sure that all actions planned by school leaders are checked to confirm whether or not they are effective in raising pupils' achievement
 - linking teachers' performance management with pupils' progress
 - increasing opportunities for middle leaders to drive up standards in their area of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start school in the Nursery class with skills and knowledge well below those typically expected for their age. The new senior leadership team has identified that Early Years Foundation Stage assessment information has in the past been inaccurate and overly positive. School leaders are now confident that assessment information is reliable and this indicates that pupils start Key Stage 1 well below national levels.
- Pupils leave Year 6 with broadly average levels of attainment and appear to make better progress in Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 1 or the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, progress over time is difficult to accurately determine because of the unreliable assessment procedures previously used at the school.
- The proportion of pupils making expected and better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics was variable across 2011 and 2012 during the time of the amalgamation of the two schools. Inspection evidence indicates that achievement requires improvement as the progress of pupils currently in school remains inconsistent.
- Pupils who read to inspectors were enthusiastic about reading and knew that there was an expectation that they would read every night at home. Pupils performed well in the national Year 1 screening that checks pupils' ability to match letters and the sounds that they make. Attainment in reading is broadly average by the time pupils leave Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well. This is because their progress is closely checked and they receive well-focused support from teachers and teaching assistants.
- The attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant is above that of similar pupils nationally in mathematics and comparable in English but below that of other pupils in this school. In 2012 the average points score in national tests at the end of Year 6 in English by those eligible for free school meals was 26.2 and for all other pupils in the school 29.3; in mathematics this was 27.8, with all other pupils attaining 30.4 average points.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching varies across the school and some is good and outstanding. However, overall teaching requires improvement because it is not yet good enough to make sure that progress is consistently good in all classes and key stages.
- Lessons that require improvement often run at a slow pace. For example, in one class the teacher kept a group of pupils on the carpet to explain methods of subtraction; this group did well. However, a second group working independently lost interest because they did not fully understand what they were doing and did not complete enough work. It took too long for the teacher to become aware of this difficulty and remind pupils of what they should have been doing. Moreover, in some lessons teachers follow a script that they do not readily adjust in order to meet the learning needs of all pupils in their group.
- Teachers mark work regularly but the quality of guidance varies considerably. At its best, marking praises what pupils have done well and provides advice on how to make work even better. When marking is less than good, work is only ticked and some inaccurate spellings identified.
- During one outstanding science lesson pupils worked outdoors in groups. They had to find out who could jump the furthest and why. Pupils were really engrossed in their challenge and were able to independently call on previous mathematical and scientific learning to provide evidence to support their conclusions. The school curriculum does not regularly provide opportunities for pupils to take so much responsibility for their learning or to be so interested and engaged by the activity.
- Teachers do not always use the school's pupil progress information or their own assessment of

learning to plan lessons and activities that challenge all pupils, particularly the more able. For example, during one mathematics lesson all pupils were rounding numbers up or down to one decimal place. A number of pupils were well able to work with numbers to two decimal places but were not provided with that level of challenge by the teacher.

- Teaching assistants support small-group and one-to-one work effectively because they question pupils well. They also work closely with teachers to be certain that the work provided for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is at the correct level to help them make good progress.
- School leaders have recently introduced new ways of teaching reading and writing in all classes across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants lead small group sessions that are helping pupils to make improved progress with their literacy skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are polite and courteous to adults including visitors and enjoy spending time together. For example, pupil houses are made up of pupils from each year group. They work together twice each term to plan assemblies and activities which encourage all pupils to work together, get to know each other and become good friends. This is especially important to staff because the school is currently on a split site and they want pupils to know they are all part of the same school family.
- Pupils are keen to learn and behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils say that behaviour is always good, especially since the new headteacher came into post.
- House captains and prefects help to sort out any small disagreements in the playground. They take these duties very seriously. For example, one house captain heard that a younger pupil was feeling a little unhappy and he immediately took steps to make sure that peer support could be provided.
- Pupils feel safe in school and parents agree that their children are well looked after. Pupils are confident that staff care for them and know that if they had any concerns an adult would listen to them and help them solve their problem.
- Though most pupils are keen to learn most of the time, some can become a little distracted when lessons do not interest them enough.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the different forms that bullying can take including cyber-bullying and name-calling.
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically about raising money for a range of charities and sending school supplies such as pencils and rulers to a school in Cape Town, because they recognise that you have to help others who are less fortunate.
- Attendance is average; however, pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they were really happy coming to school because 'teachers are helpful and everyone is so friendly.'

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher has a very clear view of the direction she wants the school to take. She is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher and together they have quickly identified a range of priorities that must be addressed to help raise standards across the school. They have not yet had enough time to check that all of their actions help to improve pupils' progress.
- The speed with which school leaders have put systems in place and evidenced that some actions are improving pupils' achievement in reading and writing indicates that they are able to continue to make further improvements.
- A staff training programme that fits school development priorities has been put in place and teachers' performance is regularly checked. However, the system does not yet link progression through teachers' pay scales with pupils' progress.

- Senior leaders are mindful that they must develop the role of middle leaders and have brokered support from external agencies to help improve their skills. However, some middle leaders do not yet have enough opportunities to drive the quality of learning and teaching in their subjects and areas of responsibility.
 - The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well through their core values which are celebrated and referred to across the school. Pupils are also given opportunities to reflect on learning, behaviour and attitudes both in class and during assemblies.
 - School leaders have worked extremely hard to make sure that the two schools came together as one as quickly as possible and the positive attitudes of staff, parents and pupils indicate that they have been successful.
 - The school curriculum has focused very heavily on developing literacy and numeracy skills, with some success evident, especially at Key Stage 2. However, it does not yet provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop creative skills or use the outdoor space well as a learning resource.
 - Pupil premium funding has been allocated largely to fund staffing costs and provide enrichment activities for pupils. In the past leaders and managers have not always checked the impact of this spending on the progress of these pupils. School leaders now understand that they must make sure that the actions taken are helping pupils who are eligible for the funding to close the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils in the school.
 - The local authority has supported the school by brokering support from local schools, especially for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the newly appointed headteacher.
 - Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide appropriate levels of support and challenge. They know the strengths of the school and areas that require improvement, including the quality of teaching. They carefully review data and recognise that pupils' achievement is inconsistent across the school. The governing body has agreed to increase spending on staff to support pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. This confirms their commitment to providing equal opportunities for all pupils. Governors manage the budget well, participate in relevant training and recognise that teachers' progression through the pay scale must be linked to how well pupils perform. However, they have not questioned the school closely enough to ensure that this has happened in the past or that underperformance has been successfully tackled.
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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	106506
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	400230

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	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Damian Roach
Headteacher	Cathie Williams
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2010
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Fax number	01942 681637
Email address	enquiries@admin.saintgabriels.wigan.sch.uk

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