

St Veronica's Roman Catholic Primary School, Helmshore

Raven Avenue, Helmshore, Rossendale, BB4 4EZ

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school is an extremely cohesive community with a very strong family atmosphere and a clear set of values which underpin everything it does.
- The headteacher, staff and governors relentlessly pursue excellence in all areas of the school's work, and are dedicated to providing opportunities to maximise the potential of every pupil, through outstanding teaching.
- As a result pupils' achievement is outstanding. High attainment has been maintained and pupils make excellent progress whatever their starting points.
- In Key Stage 1 while pupils achieve very well in writing, they do not do quite as well as in reading and mathematics. They do not always have enough opportunity to apply their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Teachers challenge pupils to do well and high quality marking and feedback ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils' progress throughout their time in the school is carefully monitored and any underperformance is quickly addressed.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and are a key strength of the school. Pupils are well known as individuals by their teachers and teaching assistants who meet their needs very well.
- Occasionally in lessons pupils are not always given enough time to work on their own.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. They get on extremely well together and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils feel completely safe in school. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and have great confidence in the adults in the school.
- The school has an enriched curriculum that highly engages all pupils and contributes to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- All of the parents in the online Parent View survey would recommend the school to others.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons or part lessons, including one joint observation with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with school leaders and with two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors also met a representative from the local authority.
- A discussion was held with a group of pupils and inspectors spoke informally to other pupils in lessons and during break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at the work pupils were doing in lessons and in their books over time. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about their enjoyment of reading.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and examined a number of documents. These included data concerning pupils' current achievement, development plans and performance management information. Inspectors also looked at records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements. Minutes of governing body meetings and the school adviser's reports were also considered.
- Inspectors considered 33 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) together with other evidence submitted by parents through letters. They also took into account responses to the questionnaires completed by 17 staff.

Inspection team

Robert Birtwell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school, with six classes.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is around average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards of writing in Key Stage 1 still further by ensuring pupils have more opportunities to practice writing across the curriculum.
- Ensure that teachers always allow pupils enough time to work on their own.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children join the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. Strong teaching and excellent care ensure that they settle quickly and make good progress across all areas of learning.
- When they enter Key Stage 1 pupils make very good progress. At the end of Year 2 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been significantly above the national average for the past five years. Whilst pupils achieve very well in writing, they do not do quite as well as in reading and mathematics. They do not always have enough opportunity to apply their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils continue to make rapid progress throughout Key Stage 2. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been significantly above average for four of the last five years. Although it fell slightly in 2012, the school's information about pupils' achievement shows that current Year 6 pupils are on course to achieve very strong outcomes in national assessments this year.
- Inspection evidence and the school's data confirm that pupils make excellent progress throughout the school, especially in Years 5 and 6. The proportion of pupils making expected and more than expected progress is well above average in both English and mathematics.
- Rapid progress is made in reading because it is well taught and effectively promoted throughout the school. Pupils get regular opportunities to read in school and skilled teachers and teaching assistants ensure that their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is reinforced both in lessons and during support sessions.
- Very few pupils are supported by the pupil premium, but their attainment and progress are broadly similar to that of other pupils.
- There are few disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. In 2012, particularly difficult circumstance meant that some of these pupils did not do as well as they should. However, they typically achieve as well as other pupils in the school and make very good progress.
- Well-planned action is leading to an improvement in the achievement of these vulnerable pupils, and any gap between their attainment and that of other pupils is narrowing. This shows the school's commitment to equal opportunities.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- All of the teaching observed during the inspection was at least good, and a good proportion was outstanding. Teachers' professionalism, enthusiasm and subject knowledge ensure that lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all pupils. They set challenging and thought-provoking tasks that engage and inspire all pupils, and have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.
- In an English lesson, for example, pupils analysed a piece of persuasive writing on the use of mobile telephones, before enthusiastically applying the principles to construct their own piece of writing on school uniforms. They produced work of a very high standard and made outstanding progress.
- Teachers know pupils very well. In lessons they ensure that learning occurs at a brisk pace and use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding and progress and to challenge them to do better. Pupils are successfully encouraged to work in a variety of situations either on their own or as part of a group or team.
- Marking and feedback are very effective in helping pupils to meet their learning targets. They get very clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work and teachers regularly and accurately check pupils' rates of progress.
- Teaching is outstanding because the features of teaching detailed above are present in a

significant proportion of lessons. This ensures that pupils learn very well over time. Occasionally, when teaching is good but not outstanding, pupils do not have enough time to work on their own.

- Since the last inspection, teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and is now at least consistently good. There is a good balance between teacher-directed and child-selected activities, and the use of the indoor and outdoor environment. Learning is purposeful and well matched to children's varying levels of development. This leads to them making at least good progress.
- Teaching assistants are deployed very well to provide effective intervention and support where it is needed. This support is very carefully focused to meet the needs of individual and vulnerable pupils and ensures that they make progress in line with other pupils.
- Virtually all parents who responded to the online Parent View questionnaire considered that their child was taught well and made at least good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent. Pupils are very thoughtful and polite, and show great courtesy to staff and visitors. They get on very well with each other and with adults in the school. This has a positive impact on the climate for learning and contributes to the caring ethos which is evident throughout the school.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They are keen to do well, settle quickly and enthusiastically to the work they are set, and respond very well to questions and requests. As a result they enjoy school and attendance is high.
- From the time they start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught what is expected regarding good behaviour. This is reinforced as they move through the school and older pupils readily take on responsibilities such as reading buddies, play leaders and prefects. This makes a strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet. They are aware of different types of prejudice and bullying, but say that there is virtually no bullying in school. They are entirely confident that staff would deal with it quickly and effectively if it occurred.
- Parents are unanimous in having a very positive view of behaviour as shown by those responding to the Parent View online questionnaire. They greatly appreciate that the school is a happy, caring and safe environment in which their children are well looked after and all would recommend it to others.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- School leaders and managers, including governors, have very high expectations for the school and have maintained consistently high standards for the last five years. The headteacher provides inspirational and principled leadership. There is a very strong and clear ethos and vision which is central to everything the school does. This is shared by all staff, and they work very closely to support each other. The school is a very cohesive community which successfully promotes and celebrates each pupil's uniqueness. Teachers and parents unanimously agree that the school is well led and managed.
- Leaders and managers rigorously analyse pupils' progress and this is used to set targets for both pupils and teachers. As a result the school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate and the school-improvement plan is clearly focused with ambitious but realistic targets.
- There is a strong focus on the continual improvement of teaching. All teachers have targets that are linked to pupil performance, and these are taken into account when deciding on pay awards. Appropriate professional development, coaching, mentoring and support have ensured that

teaching has improved steadily. As a result any weaker teaching has been eradicated and all teaching is now at least good, and outstanding overall.

- The school's curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs and promotes extremely positive behaviour. It is carefully constructed to challenge pupils in their learning, encourage problem-solving and to develop creative thinking. In a science lesson, for example, pupils were provided with a range of components and challenged to make a bulb light up. A wide range of well-supported activities and clubs add enrichment, as well as special events, trips and visits.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and understanding are excellent, and are successfully promoted across the school. This is highlighted, for example, by strong church links, a clear weekly focus on a social or moral issue, and contact with partner schools in Salford and Africa to raise pupils' cultural and global awareness. As a result, pupils are kind, reflective and responsible. They know that discrimination should not be tolerated and reflect the school's commitment to equal opportunities.
 - The local authority has provided light touch but effective support for this very successful school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body carries out its responsibilities very well. While governors are very supportive of the school they clearly hold it to account. An effective committee structure provides robust challenge when needed. Governors are provided with detailed information by the headteacher about all aspects of the school's performance, including pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. They use this information well and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths as well as high expectations for further improvement. They have a good knowledge of the links between teachers' performance and salary progression. They ensure that the school's finances are well managed and know how pupil premium funding is allocated and the impact it is having on pupil performance. They make sure that the school meets all statutory requirements, including those related to safeguarding.
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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	119589
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	403399

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	H Lord
Headteacher	P Macro
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2007
Telephone number	01706 226315
Fax number	01706 226604
Email address	head@st-veronicas.lancs.sch.uk

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