

St Clare's RC Primary School

Victoria Avenue, Blackley, Manchester, Lancashire, M9 0RR

Inspection dates 17–18 April 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | 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

- From their starting points, not enough pupils make consistently good progress in their reading, writing and mathematical skills and knowledge by the end of Year 2.
- Progress through Years 3 to 6 is too variable, particularly in writing and specifically for boys.
- Pupils' standards in writing are not high enough.
- A few teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough, so pupils only make adequate rather than good progress.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent throughout Years 1 to 5.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to systematically develop and use their reading, writing, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in their work in different subjects.
- Subject leaders, including those for English and mathematics, are at an early stage of their work. There is more to be done in order to improve teaching and the standards pupils reach.
- While governors are working hard to support the school, they do not challenge leaders sufficiently well to ensure high quality teaching across the school so that pupils do as well as they can.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is taking a firm lead in bringing about change; a strong senior leadership team is now in place.
- The school provides a wide range of enrichment activities that motivate pupils and is appreciated by them.
- Gaps between how well different groups of pupils perform are narrowing.
- Some teaching is of good and outstanding quality and assessment systems are now more robust than they used to be.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because information about what children know and can do is used well by teachers when planning what is on offer in lessons for all children.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They feel safe and enjoy school and this is reflected in their improved attendance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons. In addition, they observed small groups of pupils receiving extra support for English and mathematics.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and to parents as they brought their children to school in the morning. They took account of 12 responses from parents to the on-line (Parent View) survey.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two governors, staff members and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including those relating to child protection and safety, the school's checks on teaching and school improvement.
- Inspectors heard four groups of pupils read and checked the school's assessments of pupils' progress in reading. They also looked at the school's tracking system showing pupils' progress in English and mathematics.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Machell

Additional Inspector

David Deane

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Clare's R.C. Primary school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional government funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are both above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. In recent times, this has increased year-on-year.
- The school has gained Healthy School status. A breakfast club, run by the governing body, is available each morning.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better across the school by:
 - ensuring teachers spend less time giving unnecessary instructions to the whole class so that pupils have sufficient time to complete their work
 - using the improved assessment systems more rigorously to provide pupils with suitable tasks that are matched to their level of ability and help them to take the next steps in their learning
 - providing opportunities for pupils to be involved in tasks independently and take more responsibility for their own learning and progress.
- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 so that it is at least good in mathematics and English, and most particularly in boys' writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils make consistent progress in all classes and all phases of the school
 - providing regular and specific opportunities for pupils to reinforce and practise their writing skills in all subjects
 - increasing the number of pupils who reach the expected and higher levels in the end of Year 2 national assessments.
- Increase the impact that leaders at all levels have on pupils' standards and progress by:
 - making more effective use of the systems for checking on pupils' progress, especially to ensure that help is targeted towards those in danger of falling behind.
 - providing more opportunities for subject leaders to check on the quality of teaching and bring about improvements, in English and mathematics.
 - ensuring that governors rigorously hold school leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the standards pupils reach.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' overall achievement requires improvement. As pupils move up through the school, the progress they make varies too greatly. Progress in writing, particularly for boys, requires improvement.
- The school has worked hard to make improvements since the previous inspection. Recently, there has been a rise in pupils' standards in reading and mathematics and this is reflected in the improved performance in 2012 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, with average standards in English and mathematics. However, achievement continues to require improvement because pupils' progress from their starting points is not consistently good across all year groups or for all groups of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1. Standards in writing at both Key Stages 1 and 2 are below average.
- Children join the Reception classes with skills and abilities that are often below those typically seen for their age. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and an increasing number are reaching the standards expected at the start of Year 1.
- In 2012, pupils' standards by the end of Year 2 showed some improvements but, year-on-year, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been below average.
- Overall progress from Year 1 to Year 5 is variable across year groups because of differences in the quality of teaching. Pupils do not always build continuously on their skills as they move up from class to class.
- While progress is inconsistent in Years 3 to 5, by the end of Year 6, most pupils make the progress expected of them in reading and mathematics because teaching in Year 6 is consistently good.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is a notable weakness in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, particularly for boys. Initiatives introduced by senior leaders over the last year to support boys have yet to make a positive impact on their rate of progress.
- Achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics is variable from class to class. This was confirmed during lesson observations where, for example, there were limited opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in a range of subjects.
- Most pupils have a good knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics) and know how to 'break words down' when they are unsure about new vocabulary. At Key Stage 2, pupils are enthusiastic readers and most read widely. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good use of phonics to help them read unfamiliar words.
- Pupils who receive additional funding through the pupil premium make the same progress from their starting points as other pupils. This is because they receive additional support and have opportunities to enhance their experiences. In 2012, for example, pupils in receipt of free school meals and supported through the use of this funding, did equally as well as other pupils in English and mathematics national tests at Key Stage 2.
- The progress of disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language is inconsistent, but an increasing number make good progress, particularly in English, because of the well-targeted support they receive.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching overall requires improvement because it is inconsistent across Key Stages 1 and 2 and there is an insufficient emphasis on the inextricable link between teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Where teaching is less effective, a key weakness is that the tasks that teachers set for the pupils are not precisely matched to their ability and this limits the progress that they make.

- The quality of teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a good balance between adult-directed activities and those chosen by children for themselves. As a result, they explore and find things out independently and they learn well.
- There are examples of good teaching in upper Key Stage 2 and outstanding teaching in Year 6. Sometimes this is the result of sharply-focused strategies from school leaders to identify how teaching can be improved. In lessons where teaching is good, teachers have good subject knowledge, the pace of learning is rapid and pupils are challenged to think for themselves. In such lessons, pupils of all levels of ability are fully involved in everything the sessions have to offer.
- In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils made good progress because of the teachers' high expectations. In this lesson, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, were encouraged to contribute their ideas for the benefit of their classmates. Pupils work well in groups and they like supporting their classmates and thoroughly enjoy the activities.
- In lessons where progress is less than good, some pupils are not always as engaged in their learning as they should be. This is often because they have to listen to lengthy introductions by the teacher and they are not able to begin their assignments quickly enough.
- Similarly, although challenge for all groups of pupils is generally realistic, it is on occasions not high enough for boys, this is particularly the case in writing. This impedes their learning because they are not always required to aim for the highest standards and they sometimes lose interest in the activities.
- Teachers' marking is helpful to pupils, who as a result have a good understanding of the levels at which they are operating. However, teachers' knowledge of what pupils understand and can do is not always shared well enough with other teachers so that they can all set work that is at the right level of difficulty for their pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are proud of their school and feel safe within it because, in their words, 'The staff and our friends look after us.' They value the nurture groups and appreciate the staff who work skilfully and with considerable success in this area to promote pupils' emotional development.
- Staff are good role models and the talented team of support assistants in particular, fosters pupils' self-esteem well. Pupils are encouraged to think more deeply about the world around them and they reflect upon the importance of treating others with respect and of always looking for good in their classmates. As a result, the school is a racially harmonious community in which pupils value the contribution of all.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Indeed, where teaching is good or better, there are examples of outstanding behaviour and engagement in learning. Pupils are proactive in their support for others and they treat visitors with the utmost dignity and respect.
- Pupils have a wide perception of different forms of bullying, including that which is based on prejudice or homophobic bullying, for example. They say that bullying does exist but that when it occurs it is dealt with rapidly and successfully by the school.
- There is an active school council which puts forward ideas on how the school can improve further. The 'buddy' system ensures that no-one is lonely at break and lunchtime. There is an incredibly wide range of extra-curricular activities, including residential trips, and pupils celebrate a variety of cultural festivals.
- Attendance is broadly average and is beginning to improve as a result of the effective strategies to promote it. These include the celebration of exemplary attendance and begin as early as in the Nursery class.
- Parents are supportive and believe the school is a welcoming place for their children. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View indicated that the school makes sure children are well behaved and deals with bullying effectively.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- While the school has an accurate understanding of its performance, information is not used sharply enough to set targets for improvement. For example, there is insufficient emphasis on the need to accelerate pupils' achievement and how improvements in teaching can bring this about.
- The new subject leaders do not consistently check on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making in lessons, particularly those who have been targeted as at risk of falling behind.
- However, the recently developed senior leadership team is committed to ongoing school improvement. The perceptive headteacher leads by example and is ably supported by the assistant headteachers. They are all regarded highly by teaching, support and administrative staff.
- Staff speak positively about performance management and the emphasis senior leaders place on improving teaching and they give examples, confirmed by inspection evidence, of where individual coaching has improved its quality. They are equally as positive about the opportunities they have for professional development. This being said, the link between teachers' performance and their progression along the pay scale is currently not sharp enough.
- The school leaders know that there is more to do in order to improve achievement and ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. They develop and foster good relations between pupils of all levels of ability and from all cultures. There is zero tolerance for any form of discrimination. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are fully in place, regularly reviewed and meet statutory requirements.
- The school provides significant enrichment in the curriculum and a whole range of extra activities. Pupils are eagerly anticipating the residential visit to Conover Hall Activity Centre and are very appreciative of the range of extra-curricular activities. They speak with pride about representing their school in the football and netball teams. Pupils enjoy learning to speak Spanish, to play brass instruments, and the Times Table Club is also very popular.
- The wider curriculum has not yet been sufficiently developed to ensure pupils have the opportunity to systematically practise their key skills of reading, writing, mathematics and ICT in a range of subjects.
- The school has good links with a range of partners, including Our Lady's Roman Catholic High School and a local cluster of schools.
- The local authority supports the school well and is confident that the current leadership team can now achieve the improvements required.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have played an important part in working with the school leaders to tackle weaknesses and support improvement. They are regular visitors to the school. They ensure that performance management of teachers takes place and that targets are linked to salary progression, but recognise that these are not currently sharp enough. Governors make sure that money, including the pupil premium funding, is used to benefit the pupils who are entitled to it. They ensure that safeguarding requirements are met. They take part in any additional training that will help them carry out their duties. For example, governors have recently attended training and support sessions on the analysis of data. However, currently, they are not fully informed about the quality of teaching and the progress that all groups of pupils are making, and could do more to hold school leaders to account for the school's performance. Nevertheless, the governing body made a significant contribution to improvements seen in the last year. Consequently, inspectors are not recommending that there should be an external review of the governing body.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 105554 |
| Local authority | Manchester |
| Inspection number | 404999 |

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 | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 440 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Bill Ryan |
| Headteacher | Vincent Jones |
| Date of previous school inspection | 22 June 2011 |
| Telephone number | 0161 7404993 |
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