

Alston Lane Catholic Primary School, Longridge

Preston Road, Longridge, Preston, Lancashire, PR3 3BJ

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching. Consequently, attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Progress is particularly good in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers enthuse pupils through providing interesting activities, and generally maintain a brisk pace to learning in lessons.
- In most lessons, teachers make good use of the school's information about different pupils' attainment to give different groups work which is challenging but manageable by all of them.
- Teachers regularly monitor pupils' ongoing progress in lessons, and give them effective help if they are confused.
- Pupils have good collaborative skills because teachers provide effective opportunities for them to work together and discuss their ideas.
- Pupils' work is marked frequently and accurately so they know how well they have done.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school and are keen to learn. They behave well and have very good relationships with each other and with staff. They feel very safe in school.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, keep a close track of teachers' performance and of individual pupils' progress. They act quickly to address any issues that arise so that teaching and achievement are improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are inconsistencies in teaching, so that elements that are strong in most lessons are relative weaknesses in some others.
- At times, the pace of learning slackens, or a few pupils are given work that is too easy or too hard for them and they lose concentration.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to discuss their work together and help each other improve, particularly in writing.
- Although marking sometimes suggests how pupils can improve, this advice is often not precise enough and pupils do not always respond to their teachers' suggestions.
- The school's system for tracking pupils' progress does not efficiently give leaders information about any differences in the progress of different groups.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed substantial parts of 15 lessons and also made several shorter visits to classes to observe the range of activities being taught in different subjects.
- Inspectors talked formally to groups of pupils from Years 2, 3, 5 and 6, and spoke informally to others. Several pupils were heard reading in Years 1 and 6. Samples of pupils' work in their books and on display were analysed.
- The team had formal discussions with members of staff, with representatives of the governing body, and with an adviser from the local authority. Inspectors also talked to all staff whose lessons had been observed, about their teaching.
- The team examined a variety of documentation, particularly information about pupils' progress, paperwork relating to keeping pupils safe, documents showing how teachers' performance is monitored and supported, and the school's own evaluation of its work.
- Inspectors took note of 27 replies to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) as well as the views of 95 parents who replied to the school's own questionnaire. Fourteen staff questionnaires were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Steven Hill, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Catherine Beeks

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alston Lane is a little smaller than average for a primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British, with a few from a range of minority ethnic heritages. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, who are supported through school action, is well-below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also well-below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are minimum levels set for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A pre-school provision and a breakfast and after-school club take place on the school site. These are managed privately and are inspected and reported upon separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching more consistent, so that achievement improves, especially in writing, particularly by ensuring that:-
 - all lessons keep up a good pace to learning throughout
 - tasks are always at just the right level of difficulty for pupils of different abilities
 - pupils are given more opportunities to discuss their ideas and their work together, particularly when they are writing
 - the marking of pupils' work gives them more precise advice about how to improve, and that pupils always respond to their teachers' comments and questions.
- Refine the system for tracking pupils' progress so that leaders can more quickly identify and address any differences in performance between different groups.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good so that attainment is above average by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. Boys and girls now all make good progress at each key stage. Progress has been particularly strong in reading for some time and is now similarly strong in mathematics, following a focus by the school on raising achievement in the subject. Achievement in writing has improved since the previous inspection, and continues to do so. However, while progress in writing is good, it is not as good as in reading and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their classmates because they are given work that is closely matched to their needs in class. In addition, carefully tailored extra help outside class is provided to help them overcome their specific difficulties and enhance their learning.
- Pupils who are entitled to support from the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make the same good progress as their classmates. This is because they are given specific academic or pastoral help to meet their individual needs and are fully included in all aspects of school life. Their attainment is not significantly different from that of other pupils.
- Children make a very good start to their schooling in the Reception class. Their attainment on entry is variable but overall is as expected for their age. They settle in quickly and make good progress because they are fully involved in the many interesting activities provided indoors and out.
- Pupils develop good skills in a range of subjects. For example, pupils in Year 5 made good progress with their information and communication technology skills as they used a control program to support their work in design and technology. In a physical education lesson, pupils made good progress in rolling a ball in an accurate, controlled way because of the clear instructions they were given, as well as their own enthusiasm.
- Pupils make a good start to reading from the younger classes, where the good teaching of phonics (how the sounds in words relate to how they are represented by letters) is particularly well complemented by the development of a real enjoyment of books.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good, with a minority that is outstanding. Examples of good teaching and learning were observed in every class during the inspection. This picture is confirmed by evidence in pupils' books and the school's own monitoring of teaching.
- A strength of many lessons is the way that teachers and other adults keep a careful eye on how well different groups are progressing. This means that they are able to put pupils right if they make mistakes, explain things again to any who are puzzled, and challenge successful pupils to attempt harder or more complex tasks.
- Teachers explain tasks and new ideas well to pupils, often using practical materials or the interactive whiteboards to clarify their meaning and to generate enthusiasm. Teachers establish clear routines in classes and have high expectations of work and behaviour, which pupils try hard to fulfil.
- Teachers usually give pupils tasks that are carefully matched to their individual abilities, so that they are engaged and challenged by the work. Occasionally, some pupils are given work that is too easy or too hard, and then their concentration wanes, and they do not make the progress they should.
- Most lessons are well organised so that little time is wasted, but in a few others, pupils spend time waiting for the next task, or take a while to settle to independent work, so the pace of learning slows.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work thoroughly and point out their mistakes clearly, often

showing them how the task should have been tackled. However, marking seldom gives pupils who have been successful extra tasks to move them to the next level. Sometimes, teachers write clear follow-up questions to get pupils to think about things more carefully, but there is little evidence of pupils consistently responding to these.

- Some excellent use is made of discussion and work in small groups for pupils to clarify their thinking. Older pupils sometimes work together to check each other's work and offer suggestions for improvement. At other times, opportunities for such discussion are missed. In writing lessons, pupils do not always have enough chance to sort out their ideas in discussion before putting pen to paper, or to share ideas together as they write, to help each other improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above-average attendance. In discussion, pupils were very positive about the fun they have in lessons, and how much they trust and rely on their teachers. Their very good relationships with staff are mirrored by the positive relationships pupils have with each other.
- Pupils enjoy learning, take a pride in what they accomplish, work hard in class, and listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. They are polite and friendly, and take a pride in the responsibilities they undertake, with older pupils particularly valuing their opportunities to help look after younger ones.
- Pupils behave well in class and around the school. Behaviour in class is sometimes excellent when pupils are fully engaged by their work. This was seen when Year 6 pupils made excellent progress in their mathematical skills because the different tasks were matched to their different needs. Outside, play is lively, but pupils are careful of each other and ensure that their play does not upset their classmates.
- Pupils are positive about the standards of behaviour in the school, but accept that it sometimes slips when pupils are distracted or do not find the work sufficiently engaging, so their concentration lapses. A group of Year 6 pupils agreed that behaviour was good but, '...not excellent'. However, they are confident that such lapses are quickly dealt with by staff.
- Pupils have great confidence in the adults to keep them safe and to help them if they have problems. They greatly value the 'worry box' which they can use to bring anything that concerns them directly to the attention of the headteacher. They know how to contribute to their own safety, when using the internet for example. Parents are very positive about how safe their children feel in school, and about the standards of behaviour.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different kinds of bullying, such as cyber-bullying for example, and are confident about what they should do if it occurs, drawing on what they have learned during anti-bullying week, for example, or in assemblies. However, they say bullying is rare and are sure that the teachers would sort out any problems that arose.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers have focused clearly on teaching and pupils' achievement, and have succeeded in improving both. The clear tracking of individual pupils' progress is used well to identify any who are not doing as well as they might, and to target extra help so that no one is left behind in their learning.
- Systems to keep a track of the quality of teaching are thorough, and teachers are given clear targets that relate to the progress of pupils in their classes, their own professional needs and the school's current priorities. Good levels of training are provided to help teachers meet their goals. Targets are assessed regularly and leaders ensure that extra support is provided if required, and that good performance by teachers is suitably rewarded.
- Pupil premium money is spent on a mix of extra academic support to eligible pupils and ensuring that they are fully involved in different aspects of school life. As a result they make the same progress as their classmates. Good leadership of the provision for disabled pupils and those with

special educational needs has led to acceleration in the rate of progress of these pupils in the last year. The good progress made by all groups illustrates the school's successful commitment to equal opportunities and to ensuring that any discrimination is eliminated.

- The school provides a wide range of activities in different subjects that enthuse pupils and enhance their learning. On a single afternoon during the inspection, for example, different groups were learning karate, developing their computer skills, learning about Australian aboriginal art and exercising furiously in the hall before measuring the effects on their body in a science lesson. A shortfall in provision to learn about different cultures, identified at the last inspection, has been rectified effectively. Pupils have particularly good opportunities to participate in music making, in school and around the community.
- A gap in achievement between boys and girls in the past has largely been eliminated, mainly because of how well individuals' progress is monitored and supported. However, the school's systems do not make it easy for managers to identify any such gaps in the performance of different groups as they arise, and so address them more quickly. Some problems with the software the school uses to track progress have exacerbated this.
- The local authority provided good support to the school through extensive training opportunities and leadership advice to the headteacher.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has good systems to monitor the school's performance, including through a careful use of data to compare pupils' achievement with that in other schools. They consistently challenge the staff about the school's performance, providing support as needed and helping senior staff set the strategic direction for the school. They monitor the quality of teaching well and ensure that good performance is rewarded and any issues addressed. They have very good systems to ensure that safeguarding is prioritised, so that procedures meet requirements.

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	119635
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	403401

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	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Filbin
Headteacher	Mark FitzGibbon
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
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