

# St Silas's CofE Primary School

Clematis Street, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 6JP

## Inspection dates

5–6 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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' attainment has risen consistently each year since the previous inspection. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in Key Stages 1 and 2, from low starting points, pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers plan their lessons and develop pupils' independent learning skills well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are thoughtful, respectful and have a clear idea of right and wrong.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and parents are confident that their children are cared for well.
- Leaders have worked with determination and skill to successfully ensure that, throughout a period of change, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement has improved.
- The governing body provides very good challenge, knows what is happening in school and is fully involved in driving improvement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching. At times adults do not always monitor pupils closely enough when they are working on their own. Sometimes this means that pupils, especially the more able, are not always constantly challenged to extend their learning.
- Teachers' marking is not always detailed or extensive enough to ensure that pupils are clear about what they have to do to improve.
- Systems to track pupils' progress are complex and, as a result, it is not always easy for senior leaders to review and evaluate the progress of different groups of pupils so that timely action is taken to provide additional support.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all mainstream classes as well as in some small groups receiving specific support for pupils learning to speak English. This totalled 22 observations, of which four were conducted in conjunction with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and to parents as they collected their children from school in the afternoon. They took account of 27 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, as well as 31 questionnaires from staff.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation, including the school's records of pupils' performance, evaluations of the quality of its teaching over time, and its short- and long-term plans. Safeguarding procedures were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors heard two groups of pupils read and checked the school's information about pupils' progress in reading. They also looked at the school's provision for those pupils in the early stages of the acquisition of English.

## Inspection team

Nigel Crome-Hawke, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Ellwood	Additional Inspector
Louise Murphy	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average primary school, with more girls than boys.
- Almost all pupils are Asian or Asian British, and the large majority from Pakistani and Indian backgrounds. Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language and approximately a quarter are at an early stage of learning English upon entry to Reception.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is 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 pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Movement of pupils in and out of the school at times other than what is normal has been average in the past but last year was well above average.
- There have been a significant number of staffing changes over the last two years. The school moved into a new building at the start of this school year but this was preceded by a period of 18 months in which the school was placed on a temporary site three miles away that involved the daily transportation of pupils from the local community. It also meant a significantly reduced teaching day and limitation upon resources and facilities.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment and improve pupils' achievement by extending the very good practices evident within outstanding lessons across all teaching, especially in respect of:
  - ensuring that adults sufficiently monitor pupils working independently, especially the more-able pupils, so that they are constantly challenged to extend their learning
  - providing detailed and extensive marking and feedback to pupils about their work so that they are clear about what they have to do to improve their learning.
- Improve leadership and management even further by:
  - simplifying the complexity of existing systems for tracking pupils' progress so that senior leaders can more easily and frequently analyse the ongoing progress of groups of pupils and take timely action, where needed, to support it.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

**is good**

- Most children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those typical for their age. They make good progress through Reception and achieve well. Progress in children's literacy and in their speaking and reading is often outstanding, especially for those children in the early stages of the acquisition of English. Highly talented dual-language teaching assistants are often used to excellent effect in this respect.
- This good progress continues throughout Key Stage 1 and both school data and inspection evidence show that this is accelerating to outstanding progress because of the good and sometimes outstanding teaching in this phase. Consequently, standards by the end of Year 2 are rising strongly.
- The teaching of reading is a major strength of the school. Pupils demonstrate a clear love of books and gain enjoyment of reading because it is taught well, often using visiting adults and support from the local community and governors. Results in the Year 1 national assessment of pupils' skills in using letters and sounds (phonics) to help them read very closely matched national expectations which, given their previous low starting points, is outstanding progress for many pupils.
- Attainment over time at the end of Key Stage 2 is low but has been rising at a faster rate than nationally each year since the previous inspection. School data and inspection evidence indicate this trend of improvement is set to continue, with current Year 6 pupils' attainment matching national expectations overall, although still being below these at the higher levels.
- Good, and in some cases accelerated, levels of progress over time can be seen in reading, writing and mathematics in many classes. School data indicate that last year saw a small number of classes making only expected levels of progress. This is also the case in the current Years 3 and 4. Overall weaker progress in mathematics across the school, identified through the school's self-evaluation last year, is being robustly tackled in conjunction with additional local authority support, and the gap is being successfully closed across the school.
- Last year a considerable number of pupils entered the school part-way through Key Stage 2 while the school was in temporary accommodation. They were quickly integrated into the school and most made progress in line with other pupils in the school. Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi and other ethnic groups also make progress in line with that of other pupils. There are no significant differences between the performance of girls and boys.
- A sharp focus on the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs enables them to make good progress.
- The school makes use of its pupil premium funding well. In 2012, for instance, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 6 in English and mathematics was broadly in line with that of similar pupils nationally but was still below that compared to other pupils across the country. This gap is being closed, with free-school-meals pupils within the school making good, and in many cases accelerated, progress this year, and on track to meet the challenging targets the school has set. This is due to the extensive range of well-targeted support activities put in place and shows the school's successful commitment to equality of opportunity.

### The quality of teaching

**is good**

- The quality of teaching over time has been good, and some is outstanding. Teaching is improving strongly as a result of new staffing and concerted action from senior leaders and governors. As a result, weaker teaching has been largely eradicated, although a very small minority still requires improvement.
- All teachers are highly committed and extremely enthusiastic, delighting in the opportunities and resources provided within their new building.

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, with examples of outstanding practice seen during the inspection. The ease with which children are able to move around the different areas of learning, both inside and outdoors, enhances their independent learning considerably.
- Literacy and numeracy are taught well, the latter benefiting from short-term support from a local authority consultant earlier this year. This has almost completely overcome some relative weaknesses in teaching in mathematics. An ambitious programme is now in place and very well on track to enrich mathematics learning further. A well-structured focus upon writing has been successful in extending pupils' skills in this area, combining well with drama, visits and visitors to extend pupils' understanding of the links between subjects.
- Considerable and highly effective use is made by adults and pupils of computer technologies to communicate and extend learning, helped by a partnership with the local city learning centre.
- Teachers have embraced adaptations to the curriculum aimed at developing pupils' independent learning skills, such as providing pupils with a series of challenge tasks. This relies upon effective planning, resourcing and support from teaching assistants.
- The strength of the best teaching within Key Stages 1 and 2, most notably within outstanding lessons, is the effectiveness with which the planning and involvement of the teacher and their assistants meets the needs of pupils during independent working sessions. Constant monitoring of progress, probing questioning and detailed feedback, both verbally and within marking, help pupils structure their own learning and move it on in relation to the assessment criteria provided. In one case of outstanding teaching pupils used both maps and compass bearings to plan a journey within the local area. Through constant requests by adults and other pupils to explain the mathematical reasoning behind their choices the class gained an excellent understanding of the practical application of many high-level mathematical concepts.
- Weaker teaching does not use this monitoring of independent working and marking and feedback as effectively. As a result, not all pupils in these classes are able to shape the next steps in their learning and the more-able pupils, in particular, are insufficiently challenged to reach their full potential.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the teaching is good. Pupils are frequently given time to reflect on issues such as morals, the arts and learning about other cultures, reflecting the school's multicultural intake and its links with a small rural primary school and with a school in India.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils are proud of their school and, together with their parents, are excited at the opportunities provided by the new building. Pupils take on various roles in the school, for example as school councillors. Pupils know right from wrong and act as peer mentors for younger children. Consequently, the school is a very harmonious community in which discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Over time, behaviour is good and in many of the best lessons is excellent. Exclusions are very rare. From the time they enter the school in Reception, children become confident and eager learners. They show good attitudes to learning in most lessons and respond well to their teachers and other adults. They work well together but occasionally, when the teaching does not capture their imagination or they are not being monitored within the independent tasks, a few lose concentration and focus.
- The playgrounds are generally happy places for pupils to be in with little sign of unpleasant behaviour. Good levels of supervision ensure that the three levels of the building do not present safety problems, but the school recognises that it still has work to do in discouraging running around between outdoor and inside areas within the open-plan building.
- Pupils say there is little bullying within the school, a view supported by most of the small number of parents who contributed their views through the online questionnaire. Pupils show a good understanding of different forms of bullying and feel confident in the school dealing with any incidents that arise. In consequence, pupils and their parents say they are safe in school.
- Pupils' attendance over time is above average, with little persistent absence. This is a

considerable achievement in relation to the period of instability over the last two years and reflects the strength of relationships the school has with the local community and parents.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher has managed the period of transition associated with the move onto the new site with great skill and determination. She has a challenging vision for the future and is very ably supported by the governing body. Staffing has been significantly changed and consolidated and morale is very high.
- The curriculum is varied and rich in opportunities to promote learning and personal development. Pupils say they enjoy the independent learning approach very much. The curriculum reflects the school's religious status well and through good partnership working with the community and its cluster of local schools it promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- Senior managers and members of the governing body use performance management robustly to improve the quality of the school's provision and support pupils' achievement. They have challenged weaker teaching rigorously and have supported teachers' professional development through extensive and high-quality professional development, including training staff to become future senior leaders and managers.
- The successful use of the pupil premium funding has widened the range of opportunities offered and helped increase the ambition and self-esteem of this group through the use of higher staffing levels and supported learning groups.
- Systems and procedures to monitor and track the progress of pupils have recently been adapted and extended. This is helping to provide teachers with better-quality information so that they can plan and provide work that precisely matches pupils' varying needs. However, some of the information produced is too complicated for leaders to regularly and easily review the achievements of different pupil groups and to provide any necessary additional support.
- The local authority recognises the very real strengths of the school, most especially in how it develops pupils' literacy skills. It extended its support last year to include focused expertise for mathematics but has returned to the 'light touch' monitoring and support received in the past as a result of the success of this work.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has played an important role in the life of the school and contributes strongly to its good capacity for sustained improvement. Governors are highly skilled and motivated and have been very effective in asking questions about areas of weakness such as mathematics last year, and about staff performance, the leadership of teaching and the use made of the pupil premium funding. They are regular visitors to the school and share in the training of staff to help move the school forward. They were especially active in supporting the school to shape the plans for the new building and in ensuring that the consequent disruption to learning and to the community was minimised. They also ensure that the school meets safeguarding 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132045
<b>Local authority</b>	Blackburn with Darwen
<b>Inspection number</b>	412132

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	406
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Malcolm Munroe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hillary Hinchliff
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 November 2009
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