

St James' Catholic Primary School, Skelmersdale

Ashurst Road, Ashurst, Skelmersdale, WN8 6TN

Inspection dates 25–26 June 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well in all key stages in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' sporting, artistic and extra-curricular activities enrich the development of their skills and talents.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Their attitudes to learning are commendable and they form strong relationships with staff and each other. They are confident, articulate and have exemplary manners by the time they leave school.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons that support pupils to explore a wide range of topics. Some teaching is outstanding, which supports pupils to become confident, independent learners.
- Pupils who have special educational needs, and those who are supported by the pupil premium funding, achieve as well as their peers.
- Leaders and managers, while relatively new, have already secured good improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and improvements to the school site.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well provided for by high quality, regular extra-curricular opportunities. The school's sporting successes are recognised at regional level.
- Governors are well informed and have high expectations. They challenge school leaders to improve the school and manage finances well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding. Some lessons do not challenge more-able pupils to achieve their full potential; consequently the proportion of pupils exceeding expected progress is below the national average.
- Performance management systems are not yet robust for all staff, as they are not yet linked to pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, an assembly and the school's breakfast club.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, the governing body, representatives from the cluster group, a representative of the local authority and with pupils.
- Inspectors took into account the 28 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of documentation, including assessment data, minutes from meetings, policies and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Rebecca Lawton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kathleen Harris

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The school has a breakfast club, which was seen during the inspection.
- The school has its own nursery class, which formed part of this inspection.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average, and the proportion known to be eligible for the pupil premium is also below average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils 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 who are supported by school action, school action plus, including those with statements of special educational needs are all lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritage is small, and the proportion for whom English is an additional language, is also very small.
- The school meets the current government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To improve teaching to outstanding and increase the proportion of pupils achieving more than expected progress by:
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are challenged in all lessons to achieve the maximum progress of which they are capable
 - increasing the time and opportunities given to pupils to reflect on and improve their work.
- To improve performance management systems for all staff, including teachers, teaching assistants and senior leaders. This is to ensure that targets are more closely linked to the progress that pupils make and staff is clear about their accountability for pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start Nursery and Reception with skills and abilities slightly below those expected for their age. They make good progress in all areas, and leave the Early Years Foundation Stage in line with national expectations.
- The progress pupils make across Key Stage 1 is steady. Almost all pupils make expected progress by the end of Year 2 in reading and writing and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' attainment is at the national average, though more able pupils are not yet reaching the higher levels.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is similar to the national average and they have made good progress from their starting points. School data forecasts that this year, a third of the pupils in Year 6 are on course to make more than expected progress in reading.
- Pupils' ability to distinguish sounds and letters has been below the national average in the national phonics check in recent years, but is steadily improving. A new system to improve the consistency of teaching of reading has recently been implemented across Key Stage 1 and 2 and is beginning to show a positive impact.
- Pupils report that they read widely and regularly, and a new school library is enthusing pupils with an excitement to read even more often. Reading has a high profile in school.
- Those pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. They are supported by personalised programmes and are closing the achievement gap to reach the same levels as their peers.
- Those pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress. The funding to support them is well spent on individual programmes of academic support as well as cultural and extra-curricular activities that enrich their experiences in school. The school is committed to equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- Although there remains a small gap of one term between the progress of those pupils who are eligible for free school meals and their peers, this gap is closing.
- Pupil's books show good progress across all subjects, and a particularly good range of approaches in religious education. Pupils write regularly in all subjects which helps them to improve and extend their writing skills.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Lessons are interesting and supported by good quality and unusual resources. For example, in one lesson seen during the inspection, pupils had live worms on their desks to encourage them to write descriptions.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's learning in a wide range of areas is monitored and supported well. The use of interesting resources gains their interest. For example, a visit from animal experts where children were allowed to stroke and handle pets, including snakes and spiders, sparked children's enthusiasm for writing and drawing.
- In the best lessons, teachers skilfully question pupils to extend their understanding, and pupils are supported to be independent learners. Teachers devise extensive practical experiences to immerse the pupils in activities that they can then discuss and write about.
- In some lessons seen, and in some books, it is clear that more-able pupils could be stretched further, and that lessons could be adapted with more challenging tasks to enable these pupils to achieve more than the national average. Teachers support the less-able pupils well, but do not always make clear to more-able pupils the steps they could take to stretch themselves further.
- In some lessons, pupils are not given sufficient time to reflect on and improve their work. Teachers' comments and feedback are not routinely followed up with designated time for pupils to make improvements, so the full impact of careful marking is not seen.

- Pupil's work is assessed regularly, and new systems to ensure grades are accurate across subjects and year groups are currently being implemented. The new assessment co-ordinator is highly skilled, and is implementing new systems which are having a positive impact on the accuracy and frequency of monitoring pupils' progress.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and have key roles within the classroom supporting the learning of groups of pupils. They enable pupils to explore topics by asking good quality questions that require pupils to extend their knowledge and learning.
- Staff is very aware of the particular needs of pupils with special educational needs, and plan for these needs well. The help that these pupils receive is tailored to their academic and social needs and as a result, they achieve well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupil's attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons are excellent. Pupils are resilient and have a keen desire to learn and improve. They work hard in lessons, and are able to work independently as well as in groups.
- Outside of lessons, pupils are well mannered and polite. They follow well-established routines for movement around school, at assemblies and lunchtimes and look after each other around school. For example, without prompting from an adult, an older pupil was seen carrying lunchboxes for younger pupils at lunchtime so that they could carry their drinks. Another pupil went inside to get a hat for a younger pupil at breaktime. These kinds of activities are commonplace around the school.
- There are almost no incidents of bullying, and the few recorded behavioural incidents were minor and resolved quickly. Pupils reported feeling safe and were able to describe good tactics to resolve bullying or poor behaviour.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They participate in a wide range of good quality experiences that positively enhance their school life. Pupils have won a range of sporting achievements, cups and competitions, and have access to musical, dramatic and dance activities beyond the traditional curriculum; these experiences help to build their confidence and inspire them creatively. For example, the African music playing for 'tidy up time' in Reception inspired one boy to make up an African song and dance for the others while they gathered on the carpet. Others clapped, unprompted, to celebrate his efforts.
- Pupils, staff and parents were without exception positive about the behaviour at the school and the safety of the children.

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leadership has secured good improvement and made significant changes within the school which are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. For example, the Early Years Foundation Stage environment has been enriched by good quality outdoor resources and children now have access to more space for creative play.
- The school's monitoring of teaching is regular and accurate. However, the performance management system does not set measurable targets for improvement for all staff so they are not held fully to account for the progress that pupils make.
- Training and development opportunities are strong, and the school's links to a regional cluster has given the school access to a wider community of professionals which are supporting leaders at all levels. These opportunities extend to the governing body, site supervisor and business manager, who have all taken up professional development opportunities offered to them.
- The school's documents describing its own performance and improvement plans are accurate, but could have more detail on targets specifically linked to pupil achievement and specific personnel rather than general areas for improvement. This would aid governors and leaders to track the impact of improvements on pupils' progress and monitor accountability more closely

through performance management structures.

- The curriculum offered to the pupils is broad and balanced and well adapted to meet the needs of most pupils. Sometimes it is not so well adapted for more-able pupils.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, with 100% of responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) recommending the school.
- The local authority provides a standard level of support to the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors manage finances and staffing appointments well, although they are not able to hold staff fully to account for their performance in relation to pupils' achievement. They monitor the spending of the pupil premium funding and its impact on those pupils it is designed to support appropriately. Governors are well informed, and are able to compare the progress of the school to the national and regional averages. They are ambitious for the school and have high expectations for pupil outcomes. Governors have secured an improved community ethos since the appointment of new senior leaders and governors, which parents have welcomed.

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	119588
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	413106

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	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deacon Anthony Callaghan
Headteacher	Mr David Iliff
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2008
Telephone number	01695 728989
Fax number	N/A
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