

St James' CofE Primary School, Ashton-under-Lyne

Romney Street, Ashton-Under-Lyne, Lancashire, OL6 9HU

Inspection dates 10–11 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- The quality of teaching requires improvement across classes and subjects and, as a result, pupils do not make good progress. Overall, pupils' progress is average rather than good.
- There have been some improvements in teaching, especially in the teaching of reading for younger pupils, but pupils are capable of making more progress in writing and in mathematics in particular.
- Although teachers' expectations have been raised recently, there is no evidence of higher standards, especially from the most able pupils.
- Overall, the pace of learning is not quick enough to ensure that pupils make good progress. Too often, work is either too easy or too difficult and this slows pupils' progress.
- The school's view of its own performance is over generous, although leaders understand the broad strengths and areas for development.
- Leaders have not held teachers to account to ensure that the quality of teaching in lessons is consistently good or better.
- The governing body has not been rigorous enough in holding the school to account to ensure that rates of pupils' progress are consistently good.

The school has the following strengths

- There is some good teaching. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in upper Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in lessons as a result of teaching which is fast paced and which helps them to learn rapidly.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They are polite, kind and enthusiastic learners. There is a calm, respectful atmosphere in school and pupils work hard and respond very well to all staff.
- The school's curriculum makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is especially strong with many opportunities provided for pupils to reflect on issues such as 'courage' and 'peace.'
- Pupils have good opportunities to take part in sport both within the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. This makes a good contribution to their physical well-being.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons and part-lessons taught by nine different teachers and one teaching assistant. In addition, they briefly visited four teaching sessions for groups of pupils. Four observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the lead inspector observed the headteacher giving feedback to staff on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Inspectors met with two groups of Key Stage 2 pupils and listened to a group of Key Stage 1 pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body including the vice-chair, a representative from the local authority, senior leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors took account of the 13 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and a range of comments from parents collected by the school. Also, an inspector spoke to some parents during the inspection.
- The school's work was observed and the inspection team looked at a number of documents, including safeguarding records, the school's improvement plan, the school's data for tracking pupils' progress, reports on the quality of teaching, teachers' planning and work in pupils' books, including work from the last academic year.

Inspection team

Andrée Coleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jean O'Neill

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Just over half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and about half the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- An above average proportion is eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in this school.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs supported through school action is average, and the proportion identified with special educational needs supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- In 2012, the school met 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 in order to raise standards in mathematics and in English and in writing in particular, by ensuring that:
 - the quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school
 - all teachers have equally high expectations as to the quality and quantity of work pupils are expected to produce
 - work is neither too easy nor too difficult and ensures that pupils, including the most able, make rapid progress
 - information given to pupils about what they are going to learn in the lesson is specific and is more challenging particularly for the most able pupils
 - feedback through marking is specific to what pupils are learning and that the quality of this is consistently good
 - the pace of learning in all lessons is rapid
 - teachers make more use of pupils' educational visits out of school to give them opportunities to write about real-life experiences.
- Improve the effectiveness of the school's leadership by:
 - carefully checking the progress groups of pupils make from their starting points at the end of each key stage and holding teachers to account for pupils' rates of progress
 - sharing the good practice that exists within the school to ensure that teaching improves so that it is consistently good or better
 - taking prompt action if teaching is not good.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Progress varies as pupils pass through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and, although it accelerates in upper Key Stage 2, pupils make average, rather than good progress overall. A below average proportion of pupils attains above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics compared to the national figures. This is because the most able pupils do not make enough progress.
- From below average starting points, children make good progress and leave the Early Years Foundation Stage well prepared to enter Key Stage 1. However, their good progress does not continue through Key Stage 1 especially in writing. Standards in writing have been below average since the last inspection.
- Pupils' progress in reading is stronger than in writing and in mathematics throughout the school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, pupils have daily lessons to learn about the sounds that letters make (phonics) and these contribute well to developing their reading skills. A large well-stocked library is used effectively and, throughout the school day, pupils can be seen reading to adults and discussing their books.
- In 2013, pupils for whom the pupil premium provided support reached similar standards to other pupils in the school in reading, but lower standards in writing and mathematics. These pupils were approximately a term behind other pupils in writing and two terms behind in mathematics. However, in the last published data in 2012, pupils for whom the pupil premium provided support achieved higher standards than this group of pupils nationally and similar standards to other pupils in the school. The successful narrowing of the attainment gap between these two groups in 2012 has not continued into 2013.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make progress, which is slower than other pupils in school. Pupils who speak English as an additional language typically reach standards in line with, or above, similar pupils nationally.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although there is some good teaching, the quality of teaching requires improvement across classes and subjects. The teaching of writing in particular has not been good enough to ensure that pupils make good progress, especially in Key Stage 1. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to have learning experiences beyond the classroom on educational visits. However, these visits are not always followed up well through writing activities, which enable pupils to draw upon these experiences to enhance the quality of their writing.
- In some lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and not enough is demanded of the pupils in terms of the quality and quantity of work that they should produce. Pupils are not always told in enough detail what they are expected to achieve in the lesson and sometimes the work is too easy so their progress is limited. In some lessons, the work is too difficult for pupils and so they make mistakes which take time to put right.
- Where the quality of teaching is good, the pace of learning is brisk. Pupils know precisely what they are learning and know what features they have to include in their work in order to meet the teachers' high expectations. In these lessons, pupils have work that is just difficult enough to help them make good progress and the most able pupils work at a suitably higher level.
- Some improvements have been made to the teaching of reading and these have ensured that pupils reached broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013.
- In some classes, where pupils have specific information about what they are expected to learn, the feedback from teachers in marking is clear and useful and informs them of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. In these classes, pupils respond well to the marking and edit or correct their work accordingly. This is not the case in every class.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils are polite, kind and get on well with each other. The school provides a wide range of very well organised activities at lunch-time, which pupils participate in with great enthusiasm. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in the lessons where the quality of teaching requires improvement, pupils sometimes lose interest and do not pay attention as well as in other lessons.
- In the best lessons where the pace of learning is rapid, pupils show very good attitudes and are very well motivated. They cooperate extremely well and support each other's learning when given tasks that enable them to do so.
- Pupils say that they feel happy and feel safe in school. They have a good awareness of different forms of bullying and say that such issues are very rare and quickly resolved by adults who they are happy to go to for help. There is a strong culture of older pupils playing with and helping younger pupils.
- Pupils have good attitudes to school and their broadly average attendance shows that most attend school regularly. The importance of good attendance is communicated well by the school to parents and pupils and is monitored closely.
- Pupils clearly enjoy the educational visits provided by the school and take part in a range of extra-curricular activities, including sporting and musical activities.
- Comments from parents and the responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire (Parent View) indicate that pupils enjoy school and behave well.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The leadership and management of the school require improvement because there have not been enough improvements to teaching to ensure that pupils consistently make good progress across classes and subjects and over time. Leaders have not held teachers to account rigorously enough for the progress pupils make and there has not been sufficient appropriate support to ensure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress.
- Senior leaders have been over-generous in their view of the school's performance and the governing body has not challenged this view sufficiently.
- Systems to track the progress made by different groups of pupils have been refined and improved recently so the school has good information to use to target resources to help pupils, such as disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. There has been a thorough evaluation of the effect of the school's spending of the pupil premium funding and leaders are aware of which strategies have been successful and which have not. As with all pupils, expectations for the attainment and progress of these groups of pupils have been raised recently but an improvement in the standards reached is not yet evident.
- Leaders work to promote equality of opportunity and pupils new to the country and those with English as an additional language are carefully supported to help them become fluent in English. As a result, this group achieves standards in line with or above similar pupils nationally.
- The school is expecting the new primary school sport funding soon and has already contracted into a package of training for staff to enhance the quality of teaching in physical education (PE). Existing arrangements with PE teaching provided by a qualified sports coach ensure that pupils have PE sessions that contribute well to their physical wellbeing. Some of the sports teams have had recent success in inter-school competitions.
- A broad curriculum with a good range of sporting and arts activities makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is especially strong with assemblies contributing well to this through opportunities for pupils to reflect. Pupils have good opportunities to learn to play a range of musical instruments and do so with enthusiasm.
- After a period of 'light touch' support, the local authority has recently worked intensively with the school to raise expectations in order improve pupils' progress.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance requires improvement. Governors have an over-generous view of the quality of teaching. Teaching has not been evaluated in the light of variations in rates of pupils' progress over time in comparison with national figures. Data have been examined, but too little account has been taken of pupils' starting points in measuring progress. Senior leaders have not been held to account rigorously enough. Although teachers' performance is monitored and rewards given, not enough intervention has taken place when the quality of teaching has required improvement. The governing body ensures that pupils are safeguarded appropriately. Procedures and training meet statutory 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	106231
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	429209

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Gelsthorpe
Headteacher	Verna Marsh
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2009
Telephone number	0161 330 2008
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