

St Ambrose Catholic Primary School

Rostrevor Road, Adswold, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 8LQ

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Leaders and managers have successfully raised pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Between Years 1 and 6, progress is good. By Year 6, standards are above the national average in English and mathematics.
- Effective professional development and good management of the performance of staff have resulted in good quality teaching and a talented teaching assistant team.
- The provision for, and teaching of, reading is good across the school. Strategies to improve writing are having a marked effect on pupils' attainment.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. The view of one pupil exemplifies that of others, 'I don't want to leave this school because I love it'.
- Parents are very happy with the school. Much is done to involve them with their children's education.
- The senior leaders supported by the governing body, provide the school with clear plan for securing the school's future improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding in securing the best possible achievement in lessons.
- Expectations for pupils to independently apply their skills of writing and mathematics across the curriculum are too few.
- The purpose of some lessons is not clear. This reduces the pupils' ability to evaluate their own achievement and identify how to improve.
- Opportunities to widen the curriculum by promoting learning in the school grounds are not exploited.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons.
- Meetings were conducted with governors, the staff team, a representative from the local authority and three groups of pupils.
- Evaluations of a range of school documentation contributed to the inspection judgements. These included the details relating to safeguarding, the improvement plan, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance and records of pupils' attainment and progress.
- The views of parents were secured by analysing 11 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

David Byrne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Pamela Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national 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 who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes in teaching staff and the appointments of additional teaching assistants.
- The school has gained the National Healthy School status and runs a breakfast club each day.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure the current rapid improvement by increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching throughout the school by:
 - ensuring all lessons have a clear purpose that enables pupils to evaluate their own success in the lesson and identify how they can improve
 - developing a clear strategy to enable pupils to independently apply their basic mathematical and writing skills to a wider variety of contexts across the curriculum.
- Widen the scope of the curriculum by enabling pupils across the school to take advantage of learning in the school grounds.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. Progress is accelerating quickly and standards are rising. This is testament to the decisions taken to adapt the curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 and to improve the quality of teaching.
- Most children enter nursery with skills below, and in some cases well below, those typical for their age. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. When pupils start Year 1, the proportion with good levels of development is in line with the average nationally.
- The good progress continues in Key Stage 1 and standards are rising. In 2012, standards rose in Year 2 to the national average. In 2013, unvalidated results indicate that standards were above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing.
- In Years 1 and 2, the sounds that letters make (phonics) are taught effectively. Pupils confidently apply what they know about sounds and blend them well to help them with their reading and spelling. The results of the phonics screening test in Year 1 are broadly in line with the standard seen nationally.
- Standards in Year 6 have been rising steadily over the last three years to above average. Progress from pupils' individual starting points is good. In the unvalidated results in 2013, the percentage of pupils gaining the expected levels for their age was above the national average.
- In Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected rates of progress in English and mathematics is well above the above average. The 2012 and 2013 test results showed exceptional progress occurred in writing.
- Across the school, the large majority of pupils develop confidence in reading, become capable writers and acquire the essential knowledge that underpins mathematics. The pupils' ability to independently apply their writing and mathematical skills to a wide range of contexts, however, is not fully developed and this prevents them from making even faster progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good and in some cases outstanding progress. Their standards exceed similar pupils nationally. This is because teachers, and in particular teaching assistants, have a deep understanding of pupils' specific needs and use their skills to help them.
- The progress of pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium is good. They reach standards in English and mathematics that are better than similar pupils nationally and just below others in the school. This gap is closing because the grant has been spent on learning programmes that are tailored to pupils' specific needs. Extra adults have been employed and resources purchased.
- The new school sport fund is leading to good participation of all pupils in physical education and sport. This aspect of the school's work has a positive effect on promoting healthy lifestyles and good physical well-being.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching across the school has improved since the last inspection. This is because there is a systematic programme for checking on teaching, providing effective feedback and identifying appropriate professional development for staff.
- There is good blend of established teachers and teaching assistants and less experienced staff. All work as team and are keen to develop and improve their practice.
- Effective management in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with exciting learning indoors and, to a lesser extent, outdoors. The needs of each child are identified and met and pupils enjoy lessons. One pupil reported that, 'lessons are fun'. In most lessons, teachers ensure a good pace and use a range of strategies that allow pupils to discuss and develop ideas.

- Teachers ensure pupils acquire good basic skills in mathematics, reading and writing. These skills are not fully developed because there are too few opportunities for them to independently apply them across the curriculum.
- Effective use of assessment by teachers and regular discussions about the achievement of each pupil reduces the chance of anyone falling behind. Talented teaching assistants make unique contributions to pupils needing the most support supporting reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the strongest lessons, teachers are confident in asking probing questions that make pupils think and share what they have learned. This type of questioning provides teachers with opportunities that enable them to observe and assess the learning and progress pupils make and modify their teaching within the lesson.
- In a few lessons, teaching is less effective and some pupils make slower progress. This is usually because the most able are not always given the opportunity to pursue their skills independently and pupils are not clear about how well they have succeeded in achieving the targets for the lesson. This reduces the scope for pupils to understand what they need to do to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils settle into school and make friends very quickly. One pupil told inspectors that, 'I love school and don't want it to end.'
- The strong start in the Early Years Foundation Stage leads to good personal and social development which gives pupils the skills required to form good relationships with others. This features of school life pervades all that it does.
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is typically good and at times outstanding. Adults invest time in developing thoughtful behaviour and demonstrate them well. Consequently, pupils are polite, helpful and welcoming. They get on well with each other and show respect for one another and are rightfully proud of their school.
- Strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted. These have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and they take on responsibility willingly. This might be through being a member of the school council or as playground leaders. Links within the community and a range of fund raising activities widen pupils understanding of the wider world. Connections with a school in Gambia are established and this increases the pupils' understanding of other cultures.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and understand the different types of bullying, such as cyber-bullying or persistent name calling, and how to report this. They believe that if any type of unacceptable behaviour occurs, that teachers will deal with it effectively. Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe when using computers and on the internet.
- The majority of pupils attend regularly, although a small group are persistent absentees. Staff work hard to tackle this and attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now moving towards the national average.
- Parents report a high level of satisfaction with the safety, well-being and behaviour of pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported by a skilled deputy headteacher, sets clear goals and expectations that provide staff with clarity and direction. Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination permeate all that the school does.
- There is relentless focus on improving and developing the academic and personal achievements of all pupils. All information about pupils' performance is analysed rigorously to identify any pupil at risk of falling behind so action is taken to halt any decline.
- An effective programme to manage the performance of staff sets challenging objectives. It provides effective professional development and good support for all staff, including teaching assistants. Staff at different stages of their careers are able to improve their teaching expertise

and take on leadership responsibilities.

- Rigorous, systematic checks on the quality of teaching and learning identifies the priorities for taking the school further forward. This has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of teaching and only a few issues to improve remain.
- The pupils' improved achievement since the previous inspection is very much due to the adaptations made to the curriculum. New approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics have contributed to higher standards. Sport features strongly and pupils have access to range of sporting events, including extra-curricular activities. Opportunities are missed, however, to exploit the excellent potential of using the school's outdoor environment to enrich learning.
- Parents are unanimous that they would recommend the school to others. Close and productive partnerships with parents benefit the pupils' learning and development.
- Good partnerships with others, including specialist support services, give good quality support to pupils who struggle with behaviour and aspects of learning.
- The local authority is supportive and has been part of the schools improvement in recent years. It offers objective advice and regular assessments of the school's performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body works in close partnership with the headteacher in setting the priorities and direction for the school. Governors visit the school regularly to meet pupils and staff. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and review data about pupils' progress. Consequently, governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development relating to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Governors are particularly knowledgeable about school finances, in particular the purpose and impact of the pupil premium funding. They know that this funding has been targeted on raising standards through investment in staffing and resources. The governing body plays an active role in managing the performance of the headteacher and knows well how the performance of other staff is managed and improved. It is implementing a pay policy to comply with the recently changes national requirements to link salary progression to performance. Governors undertake and seek training opportunities such as on how well the school's performance compares to national standards and other similar schools. It ensures that the school meets all 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

Unique reference number	106115
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	426105

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	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Martin
Headteacher	Helen Hilton
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2011
Telephone number	0161 4808466
Fax number	0161 4760813
Email address	headteacher@st-ambrose.stockport.sch.uk

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