

St Raphael's Catholic Primary School

Huddersfield Road, Millbrook, Stalybridge, Cheshire, SK15 3JL

Inspection dates 1–2 October 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

- Over time, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who make the expected progress in English and mathematics is average. The proportion making more progress than this is below average and the least progress is made in writing.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 has declined from being significantly above average in 2008 to broadly average currently.
- A significant proportion of teaching requires improvement in planning lessons so that different groups of pupils, the most-able pupils in particular, are challenged effectively to make more progress than expected. There is not enough consistency in teachers keeping pupils focused on challenging targets and well advised on how to improve their work.
- The quality of teaching has been judged too generously by leaders and governors and has not been linked securely to the outcomes for pupils that this teaching produces.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is good. They treat each other and the staff with respect and they have a concern for each other's welfare.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- In lessons where teaching is good, learning is lively with clear objectives and pupils make good progress.
- Leaders, governors and staff have raised their expectations and are improving the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 14 lessons taught by seven of the school's eight teachers.
- Meetings took place between inspectors, senior leaders, subject leaders, pupils, representatives of the governing body and the School's Improvement Partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school records relating to the safeguarding of pupils, data on pupils' academic performance, improvement plans, teachers' performance, leaders' evaluation of the school's work, accounts of pupil premium spending and the physical education and sports grant.
- A sample of pupils' writing and mathematics' work was looked at by inspectors.
- The inspectors took account of the views of the 53 parents who used Ofsted's on-line questionnaire Parent View to record their evaluations of the school. Account was also taken of the views of staff who completed the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Alan Lemon, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Allen

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium 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 with special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order that all groups of pupils achieve well, improve the quality of teaching so that a high proportion is good or better by:
 - ensuring all lessons are precisely planned with clear learning objectives that challenge pupils according to their different abilities and support the effective learning and good progress of all pupils
 - setting pupils targets for English and mathematics aimed at raising attainment to the next level, ensuring pupils are kept constantly aware of their targets
 - bringing consistency across the school to marking pupils' work so that they have good advice on improving their work and achieving their targets.
- Raise the standard of pupils' writing across the school by:
 - raising the expectations set for the most-able pupils ensuring they are appropriately challenged and a high proportion make more than the expected progress
 - broadening the opportunities across subjects for writing so that pupils experience a wider variety of and purposes for writing.
- Strengthen leadership and management through improving leaders' skills in assessing the quality of teaching and increasing the rigour with which teaching is checked.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- When pupils start school, the great majority are at the level expected for their age and, currently they leave school at the end of Year 6 at the level expected in English and mathematics.
- By the end of Year 6, the standards achieved by the large majority of pupils in English and mathematics are broadly average. Overall, standards are slightly lower than in several previous years when, more often, they were above average.
- As a result, pupils' progress has not been as good as it has been in some past years, something the headteacher and his team are resolved to remedy. A number of initiatives are seeing success in raising achievement in reading and mathematics and ensuring the good opportunities pupils enjoy in their personal development are being matched in their academic achievement.
- For example, the way in which the youngest pupils learn to link letters and the sounds they make is effective in them developing the necessary skills to read and spell words. As a result, in 2013, the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in linking letters and their sounds was well above average in contrast to the below average proportion who did so the year before.
- Pupils' writing work shows they have limited opportunities to write at length and further develop what they have written. The challenge to improve their writing is reduced by a lack of sharp focus on targets well aimed at the next level of achievement.
- In 2012, writing was below average and particularly that of the most-able pupils. This year, the proportion of Year 2 pupils reaching the expected level in writing has increased, although the proportion achieving higher levels of writing remains below average.
- Recent reorganisation of the teaching of reading has increased the rate at which pupils progress in learning to read. All pupils, the lowest attaining in particular, are from an early age developing their skills, interest and enjoyment of reading.
- Children in Nursery and Reception Years make the progress expected of them from their starting points in communication and language, physical and personal development, literacy, and mathematics. The variety of work and activities, a good proportion of which are led by teachers and their assistants, ensures all children develop their language, speaking and listening skills. The opportunities, through teaching and free-choice activities, to read, write and count help children learn the literacy and numeracy skills they need at the start of Year 1.
- The impact of spending the pupil premium is uneven. In 2012, the gap between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other pupils narrowed significantly in English as a result of improved achievement in reading. However, the impact on writing and mathematics was minimal and in these subjects pupils supported through the pupil premium lagged behind others by one whole National Curriculum level. The school's 2013 data indicate greater impact on writing and mathematics showing pupils supported through the pupil premium performing at the same level as other pupils in English and mathematics.
- As for all pupils, a close check is kept on the progress of pupils supported through the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This is ensuring that help available to them in lessons and the extra support taking place outside of lessons is planned sufficiently well so that these groups of pupils make the progress expected of them from their starting points.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time teaching has been sufficiently effective to ensure pupils learn and make the progress expected in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching is not consistent or strong enough across the school to make learning more effective, progress rapid and achievement higher than is currently the case.
- In the lessons seen, most required improvement although none was inadequate and some were good. In every classroom, teachers and their assistants have a good relationship with pupils and

know them well. There is always a special eye kept on those known to need extra support. As a result, all pupils get on well with their teachers, feel well supported and enjoy learning.

- Where teaching requires improvement assessment is not used effectively in planning the next steps in learning. What precisely pupils should learn and achieve is not sufficiently clear or specific in teachers' plans. Lesson objectives and how they are to be met are set out too vaguely to give teaching the sharp focus needed to boost learning and progress to a higher level.
- As a result, pupils' work turns out to be easier for some. The most-able pupils are not sufficiently stretched. In one lesson, work considered to be challenging but which a few able pupils found quite straightforward did not lead to them being given harder work to do. Similarly, when some pupils struggled with a task, this was not immediately picked up by the teacher and this slowed their progress.
- Pupils are set academic targets but they are used inconsistently by teachers and challenge is not sustained. The pupils spoken to were not sure of their targets. There is inconsistency also in how teachers mark pupils' work, particularly in the quality of advice offered on how to improve.
- The good teaching seen was based upon clear objectives and was skilful in getting pupils actively involved and taking charge of their own learning. They worked with each other and shared ideas. This produced lively, fast-paced lessons. As assessment was used to good effect, pupils' work challenged them all at an appropriate level.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Attendance is above average and this is a good improvement since the school's last inspection.
- Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and well cared for and supported by staff.
- Attitudes to learning are good. Throughout the school, pupils arrive punctually for lessons, settle quickly, concentrate well and sustain their efforts with work. They strive hard to complete tasks and be successful in achieving their aims. It is only when their lessons are less engaging and challenging that interest in learning wanes.
- Pupils choose to behave well in lessons and in all parts of the school. They make a positive contribution to each other's safety by their good behaviour. Their moral values and social skills are strong and very effectively promoted through the school's provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils show positive regard and respect for each other. They have high regard for teachers and other staff and appreciate that they are valued, cared for and kept safe in school. Concern for each other's welfare is readily and openly expressed and support offered when a pupil is hurt or feels distressed.
- Pupils are taught about bullying in all its forms and are proud that it occurs very seldom in school. This concurs with the views of the very large majority of parents who expressed their views about the school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching in each classroom regularly but it is done without the rigour required to identify clearly and tackle effectively the features of teaching and learning requiring improvement. The local authority provides light touch support to what has been regarded as a good school.
- Leaders' current assessment is of predominantly good teaching despite the evidence that this has not produced good outcomes for pupils. When checking the quality of teaching there is not a sufficient link made between the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils and how they are taught. Where pupils, most-able pupils in particular, are shown in data not to have performed well academically, this has not been sufficiently explored in terms of the quality of planning to challenge them in their lessons. As a result, the focus on raising achievement in the management of teachers' performance is not sufficiently sharp.
- The headteacher has raised expectations. Data on pupils' performance are gathered and its

analysis is shared with teachers and it informs subsequent improvement plans and teachers' professional development. Staff are fully behind the headteacher's drive for improvement. Morale is good and there is capacity to sustain the improvements underway.

- Leadership is being shared widely among staff, although in some key areas of the school's work such as mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage new leaders are still settling into their responsibilities. Teachers are being given good guidance on teaching English and mathematics but effective practice is not yet consistent across the school.
- The wider curriculum offers pupils an exciting range of options to develop their interests and talents through a good variety of creative activities and sports. Using the physical education and sports grant, leaders have built upon existing provision, extending expertise among its staff in teaching physical education and introducing dance and gymnastics taught by specialists. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed and closely involved with supporting the school and ensuring it succeeds in providing all pupils with an effective and well-rounded education. Governors stay up to date about the work of the school by closely scrutinising reports received from leaders, their own analysis of data on pupils' performance and their frequent visits to the school. Governors know the school's strengths and areas needing improvement as well as do senior leaders and question and challenge accordingly. They are aware from detailed reports on the spending of the pupil premium and physical education and sports grant how these additional funds are being used to improve school provision and pupils' outcomes.

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	106242
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	429206

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	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Casey
Headteacher	Peter Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2009
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