

St Brigid's RC Primary School

Grey Mare Lane, Beswick, Manchester, M11 3DR

Inspection dates 22–23 October 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		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Outstanding leadership has brought significant and rapid improvement in key areas since the previous inspection.
- From below and sometimes well-below average starting points, pupils achieve well throughout the school. Standards by the end of Year 6 are average and are rising rapidly across the school.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a very good start. Provision has improved enormously over the past two years.
- The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers' expectations are consistently very high. Teachers provide work that is well matched to pupils' varying needs and abilities. Teaching assistants contribute valuably to pupils' good achievement.
- Pupils behave well in school. Their attendance is improving. They feel safe in school and their attitudes to learning are good.
- The leadership of teaching is excellent. The quality of support and monitoring of teaching by senior leaders is highly effective. Best teaching practices are shared particularly well.
- Governance of the school is exemplary. The governing body makes an outstanding contribution to the school's improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet sufficient outstanding teaching for it to be outstanding overall.
- A few opportunities are missed to question pupils rigorously to take learning that extra step.
- Sometimes, resources are not used as imaginatively as they could be to make some lessons more interesting.
- There is not always a clear response in pupils' work to teachers' marking.
- Not enough pupils reach Level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1 and Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- Fifteen lessons and parts of lessons were observed, five of which were dual observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions took place with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, pupils, parents and a representative from the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses via the online questionnaire (Parent View) to gain a representative picture of parents' views of the school. However, inspectors took account of a recent survey of parents' views conducted by the school as well as a questionnaire completed by staff members.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined documentation including: national assessment data and the school's own assessment; local authority reports; the school's own view of its work; minutes from governing body meetings; safeguarding information and samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jean O'Neill

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school in which a significant proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, including Black African and Irish Traveller communities.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average.
- A broadly average proportion of pupils are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding is well above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from services families and those who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The school meets current floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- A breakfast club is provided by the school during term time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to increase the numbers of pupils who reach Level 3 at Key Stage 1 and Level 5 at Key Stage 2, and thereby raise attainment further, the school should improve the quality of teaching to outstanding, by:
 - using questioning more rigorously in lessons to challenge pupils fully and take their learning to the next step
 - taking every opportunity to use the full range of resources available in order to captivate pupils' interest and inspire learning
 - ensuring that marking across all subjects has a clear and immediate response from pupils in helping them to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a very good start. Excellent leadership since the previous inspection has greatly improved teaching and the range of exciting opportunities for children to learn and develop. On entering Nursery, children's skills are below, and for some well-below, expectations for their age. They make good progress throughout Nursery and Reception classes and are ready with the knowledge and skills they need when they enter Year 1.
- The impact of this positive start is beginning to show in pupils' good performances in the national phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make) screening check for pupils in Year 1.
- Similarly, the proportion of pupils achieving well in reading, writing, and mathematics by the end of Year 2 has increased. Progress is good in Years 1 and 2 because teaching is strong, especially the teaching of letters and sounds. The school's ways of checking pupils' progress regularly and setting high expectations is helping many pupils to make better than expected progress from their various starting points. By the end of Year 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with the national average and improving. Pupils' current work and school assessments indicate a rapid rise in pupils who are working at and above expected levels.
- The increased rate of progress is also clear in Years 3 to 6, where progress is now good. The proportion of pupils making expected progress is much higher than the national figure. The proportion who do better than that is in line with the national average. A relative weakness (in relation to the rest of the school) in Year 3 has been turned around because of first-class leadership of teaching. Attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 has improved and is now average. Pupils' current work in Year 6 and work in other classes in Key Stage 2 show that the rising trend is sustainable.
- Pupils enjoy reading. In Year 2, for example, pupils are clear about their favourite stories and the characters they enjoy reading about. Reading is accurate and pupils read with good expression. They can work out what might happen next in a story and know the difference between fiction and non-fiction writing. In Year 6, pupils' attitudes to reading are good and pupils make good progress. Pupils are well supported at home. Their books provide the right level of challenge and pupils read them fluently and with good understanding.
- The most-able pupils are being increasingly challenged. Although this group of pupils make good progress overall, their achievement is a particular focus in the school currently. Teacher assessments of pupils currently in Year 2 show clear evidence of impact. In Year 6, the potential for some pupils to achieve the highest Level 6 in English or mathematics has already been recognised.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are very well provided for and they make good and sometimes rapid progress. The teacher in charge of this provision is very knowledgeable about how particular pupils learn and ensures that the right level of support is given to meet their particular needs.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium achieve well. Their progress is checked rigorously by school leaders to make sure that they have the same opportunity as others to do their best. Attainment gaps are closing rapidly. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals do better than similar pupils nationally and the difference between theirs' and others' attainment in the school is very small. This shows the school's success in promoting equality of opportunity among its pupils.
- Pupils from Black African and Irish Traveller communities are very settled in the school and their achievement is similar to others.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The successful improvement of teaching is driving pupils' good achievement. Good teaching is

established in the school and the amount of outstanding teaching is increasing due to the modelling of best practice and the support given by highly skilled senior leaders.

- Teachers' expectations are constantly high and ambitious targets are not negotiable because that is the agreed approach throughout the school. Subject knowledge is good and helps teachers to plan imaginative challenges. A good example is the 'maths baskets' in Year 5 whereby pupils have excellent opportunities to work on their own and explore numbers in different practical ways. These sessions bring pupils' basic skills, such as multiplication tables and understanding of number, up to a good level which they then use confidently to solve more complex problems.
- All adults work effectively as a team. This means that teaching assistants know pupils well and are equally sensitive to pupils' different needs. There is often good role play between the teacher and teaching assistant that draws pupils' interest and gets the lesson off to a good start. Overall, teaching assistants contribute valuably to pupils' good achievement.
- Technology in the classroom is generally used well. Teachers use electronic whiteboards effectively and the use of computers by pupils in the classroom, to help their learning, is a regular feature. Nevertheless, there are times when these and other resources such as pictures and written text and searching questions could be used more imaginatively in lessons other than literacy and numeracy, to add even more interest and challenge for pupils.
- Literacy and numeracy are taught well. There is some outstanding teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1 which results in pupils reading and writing with confidence. Throughout the school the emphasis on language and mathematics development is consistently strong. There is good work to be seen in displays of pupils' use of writing and mathematical work across a range of subjects.
- In one outstanding literacy lesson, pupils extended their vocabulary particularly well when focusing on the ways of using verbs. They applied this confidently to their persuasive writing. Later, outside of the lesson, a Year 4 pupil was able to explain very convincingly why a new pupil should choose to come to St Brigid's School. The outstanding teaching in the classroom had a rewarding impact on the pupil's confidence and ability to speak persuasively with real clarity as well as improving writing skills.
- Teachers' use of assessment is good. They make good use of the whole-school checking system to set and review targets for pupils' learning and this helps them to plan well for pupils' varying needs and abilities. In lessons, teachers check learning regularly to make sure pupils are achieving lesson targets. At times, teachers' questioning does not go deep enough to challenge pupils understanding and move learning up a step. There are some strong examples of effective marking, especially in literacy books, but also some marking of subjects where the response from pupils is hard to see. This means that improvement in those subjects is not always as quick as it should be.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour has continued to improve since the previous inspection. Good and sometimes exemplary behaviour is now a hallmark of the school. Pupils are attentive in lessons and show good attitudes to learning. They move around the school sensibly, behave well in the dining room and are always polite, friendly and well-mannered.
- They enjoy their lessons and the clubs provided after school. Sports clubs are particularly well attended and the impressive trophy cabinet is witness to their enthusiasm and success.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and contribute a great deal to its everyday life. The school council takes a leading role in gathering pupils' views and discussing ways to improve provision from better playground equipment to different ways of learning. Pupils willingly take on daily responsibilities such as caring for younger pupils, keeping the library tidy and helping in the dining hall.
- Almost all parents agree that their children are well cared for in school. Pupils themselves endorse that view; they say that they feel safe and share trusting relationships with adults in

school. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take including cyber-bullying and are adamant that there is no bullying or offensive name-calling.

- Attendance is in line with the national average and in the current year is showing signs of good improvement as the school's relationships with parents continue to strengthen. The breakfast club is popular and has a positive impact, for some pupils, on their punctuality. Nevertheless, a few pupils who do not attend find it difficult to get to school on time.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and by the time they leave the school they are well prepared socially and emotionally to move on to the next stages of their education.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's leadership has an immense impact on the way that the school is rapidly driving improvements. She has nurtured a senior leadership team that works with equal energy and drive. They have necessary skills and management qualities to get the best from colleagues and ensure that the school's priorities and ambitions are clearly met. Their crucial role in checking and improving teaching quality and pupils' achievement leads to an entirely accurate picture of the school's work.
- Since the previous inspection, the local authority has provided light-touch support for the school, recognising leaders' commitment to excellence and undoubted ability to manage the school's improvement on their own. The impressive record of improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching, the curriculum and pupils' behaviour and progress amply demonstrates the outstanding quality of leadership in the school and capacity to bring about further improvement.
- Leaders' unflinching concentration on raising teaching quality has paid off. This has been achieved through the outstanding input from the headteacher and senior staff. In-house coaching and demonstrations of excellent practice, followed up by rigorous monitoring and highly focused feedback from the headteacher have lifted staff expectations and clarified to all what the school's acceptable level of performance is, based on the Teachers' Standards. Leaders know that more pupils reaching Level 3 at the end of Year 2 and Level 5 at the end of Year 6 is an essential step towards raising standards further and moving toward outstanding achievement.
- Performance management, including that of the headteacher is robust and challenging. All staff are clear about their accountabilities. These are underpinned by well-planned training and support to make sure performances continue to improve so that outstanding teaching is achieved. All teachers are aware of how salary increases are linked to successful work in the classroom.
- Middle managers make a very strong contribution to the development of an engaging curriculum that serves pupils well and enables good and improving achievement in many subjects. Their leadership skills are developed in school under the guidance of senior leaders who at times also lead professional development in other schools within the local authority. Imaginative planning brings into play drama and theatrical performance and global studies, for example, which along with other subjects provide many opportunities for pupils to apply skills in different ways and enjoy learning. There are very good opportunities for pupils to broaden their horizons through visits, including residential experiences. A good range of sports clubs helps pupils to foster their skills and interests in sport and improve their physical well-being.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very ambitious for the school. With a collective mindset of 'no turning back' it has dealt fully with issues from the previous inspection and worked vigorously to improve its own performance. The recruitment of governors from different minority ethnic backgrounds and an exemplary programme of training means that the governing body is fully representative of the school community and fully equipped to challenge the school and hold it to account. The governing body is very watchful over the school's academic performance and measures this regularly against the national picture. It is fully aware of the quality of teaching in the school and how that is linked to the salaries structure. Statutory responsibilities are

dealt with efficiently. Finances are managed expertly with pupils' achievement and equality of opportunity in mind. The progress of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is given particular attention to ensure that the additional spending provides value for money and that attainment gaps are closing rapidly. Recently allocated primary school sports funding is carefully earmarked to enrich pupils' sports opportunities and upgrade teachers' skills so that pupils' physical well-being benefits. Safeguarding arrangements are fully in place and meet all 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	105523
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	426088

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	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brendan Hennessy
Headteacher	Julie Miles
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2011
Telephone number	0161 223 5538
Fax number	0161 230 6105
Email address	admin@st-brigids.manchester.sch.uk

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