

St John's Church of England Primary School

Rufford Road, Crossens, Southport, Merseyside, PR9 8JH

Inspection dates 30–31 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is not high enough by the end of Year 6.
- Throughout the school the progress made by different groups of pupils in writing, mathematics and, to a lesser extent, reading is too variable.
- Over time, teaching has not been good enough to enable all groups of pupils to make good progress and achieve as well as they should.
- Aspects of the school's development plan are not focused sharply enough on measuring the impact of the school's work to improve pupils' achievement.
- Some subject leaders are at a relatively early stage of developing their role in supporting school improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has been successful in improving teaching, pupils' progress and behaviour and has strengthened the school's capacity to improve.
- Teaching is improving strongly. Teachers give pupils good information on how to improve their work.
- Reading has a high profile and is generally taught well. Increasingly, more pupils are making good progress in this subject.
- Pupils behave well. They are courteous and helpful to others and feel safe at school.
- Senior leaders have identified the right priorities for improvement and these are reflected in the school's development plan.
- Governors are committed to ensuring that the school improves. To this end, they provide good support and challenge to the school's senior leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, one of which was conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, analysed their work and checked the school's data about their attainment and progress.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and other school leaders, nine governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors held formal discussions with pupils and spoke to others informally in lessons and at breaks and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school's own evaluation of its work and documents relating to teachers' performance, the school's safeguarding procedures, pupils' behaviour and their attendance. They considered 13 responses to the school staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of 28 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and a small number of written comments by parents. They talked to parents as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Margot D'Arcy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ian Young

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is slightly above average. (The pupil premium funding 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).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. No pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching in order to raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 and ensure more consistently good progress in these subjects for all groups of pupils throughout the school. The school should do this by:
 - ensuring that the most-able pupils are always given work that challenges them and enables them to progress more rapidly
 - further closing attainment and progress gaps between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and others so that there is more consistency of progress across year groups and between subjects
 - ensuring more consistently good progress across the school for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs
 - ensuring that pupils' interest and the pace of learning is maintained throughout lessons in order to get the best out of them
 - ensuring that work is explained clearly and any lack of understanding is picked up quickly
 - ensuring that all teaching assistants have an equally good impact on pupils' learning.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the school's action plans to raise performance include sharply focused success criteria that enable leaders to measure the impact of what has been done to raise pupils' achievement and improve the quality of teaching
 - continuing to develop the role of subject leaders to further support school improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement is not good because there is inconsistency in the progress of different groups of pupils, and attainment by the end of Year 6 is not high enough.
- By the end of Year 6, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is typically in line with the national average but the most recent (2013) unvalidated test results were not as positive. Attainment in reading and writing was significantly below average. Attainment in mathematics improved and moved closer to the national average, but while most pupils made the expected progress few did better than this.
- The school provided credible evidence to explain why some pupils did not attain as well as expected in the 2013 tests. However, the results show that too many pupils, including pupils who were known to be eligible for free school meals, did not make at least the expected progress in reading and writing during their time in Key Stage 2.
- Throughout the school, there is no particular pattern of underachievement in subjects or for specific groups of pupils. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals are now making good progress due to improved teaching and effective use of assessment information to help pupils in danger of underachieving catch up.
- Nevertheless, a significant minority of pupils are still not achieving as well as they should. This includes some more-able pupils, pupils with special educational needs and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle well into school and enjoy a wide range of interesting activities indoors and outside. They progress well in all areas and make particularly good progress in early reading and writing skills. Their knowledge and skills on entry to Reception can vary from year to year. Historically, attainment on entry has been below age-related expectations, but in the past two years it has been in line with what is typical of children this age.
- The school's assessments show that children's attainment at the end of Reception is well below the national average. However, inspection evidence shows that attainment on entry to Year 1 is currently higher than this. Inspectors consider that the proportion of children who attained a good level of development by the end of Reception is much nearer to the national average than the school's data show. This view is consistent with the good progress that children clearly make during their time in the Reception class.
- The improvement in attainment by the end of Year 2, noted by the previous inspection, has been sustained. Standards by the end of Year 2 have now been broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics for the past two years.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils' phonic skills (using the sounds that letters make to read and write) are well developed. This includes those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. In reading, the gap between these pupils and others is closing and in writing it has narrowed significantly. However, the gap remains the same in mathematics, where the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is approximately a year behind that of others.
- In the 2013 Year 6 tests, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was approximately 14 months behind that of other pupils in reading and 10 months behind in writing and mathematics. The attainment gap narrowed considerably in mathematics but there was little shift in reading or writing. While the gap appears to have closed markedly in writing, this is because the attainment of other pupils was significantly lower in 2013 than in 2012.
- Throughout the rest of the school, the pupil premium funding is being used effectively to close gaps between pupils eligible for free school meals and others. In some year groups, pupils eligible for free school meals are attaining and progressing as well as or better than other pupils, reflecting the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. However, teaching requires improvement overall because improvements are not yet sufficiently well embedded to ensure that the learning of all groups of pupils is consistently good.
- Much of the teaching observed during the inspection was good. This reflects the improvements that have resulted from the headteacher's rigorous monitoring and focused staff training.
- Teachers are becoming increasingly effective in enabling more pupils learn well through the provision of challenging activities that meet their needs. Despite this, there are times when the most-able pupils are not challenged well enough. Pupils' books show that too often these pupils complete exactly the same work as others. In lessons they sometimes have to wait too long before beginning the more challenging work that has been planned.
- In the best lessons, the most-able pupils are challenged from the outset. For example, in a good mathematics lesson these pupils began working on a demanding number problem immediately the lesson started while the teacher worked with the rest of the class. The teacher then worked with the most-able pupils to challenging them further, throughout the lesson.
- Teachers are mostly successful at providing work that captures pupils' interest at the start of lessons and, by varying the range, complexity and time for various activities, maintain this throughout. Consequently, pupils listen well, answer questions, discuss ideas and produce quality work, which they later reflect on to evaluate how well they have learned.
- However, in some lessons at both key stages the pace of learning is not rapid enough. For example, when teachers talk for too long pupils' concentration wanes and by the time they begin work some have lost interest and do not apply themselves as well as they might.
- At times, teachers' mathematical explanations are not always clear and pupils' lack of understanding is not picked up quickly enough, which slows their learning.
- Across the school and in a range of subjects, well-trained teaching assistants provide mostly good support for pupils of all abilities and make an effective contribution to teaching.
- Reading has a high profile and is generally taught well. Most teaching assistants also make a good contribution in this area, working with small groups. However, occasionally, they do not maintain pupils' interest well enough to ensure that pupils who need to catch up quickly learn as much as they should. Where the same group of pupils receive this provision daily, the impact over time limits progress.
- Feedback from teachers to pupils about their work has improved significantly. Throughout the school teachers provide clear guidance for pupils to reach the next steps in their learning. Pupils have good opportunities to respond to teachers' feedback and their work improves as a result.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults provide good models of spoken language and interact well with the children. Positive relationships promote good learning and behaviour. Reading is taught well and the children are given good opportunities to learn through play.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents, staff, governors and pupils agree that behaviour has improved.
- A minority of parents expressed some concerns about behaviour and how the school tackles bullying. Inspectors found that the small amount of inappropriate behaviour that exists is dealt with very well by the school and procedures to deal with rare instances of bullying are robust.
- Pupils said that they felt safe at school and understood how to keep themselves safe from harm in various situations, including when using the internet. Pupils have a secure understanding of most types of bullying and know what to do if they have concerns.
- Pupils are polite and get on well with each other in lessons and at playtimes. They respond quickly when adults ask them to do things and work cooperatively in groups.
- Pupils of different abilities said that work has become more interesting and that they enjoy school. Throughout the school, pupils have very positive attitudes to reading. Within this positive and improving picture, the most-able pupils explained that their work was not always as

challenging as they would like and that sometimes they repeated work done in earlier years, which they found too easy. A number of pupils expressed the view that assemblies are too long.

- Attendance is in line with the national average. The school's rigorous focus on improving attendance has led to notable reductions in persistent absences and fewer holidays in term time.

The leadership and management are good

- In the five terms since her appointment the headteacher has had a notable impact on improving teaching. This can be seen in the improvements that are occurring to the learning and progress of pupils currently in the school.
- There is now a rigorous system for checking the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher's observations of teaching are astute, with clear areas for improvement that are followed up. Training for teachers is matched to individual needs and school's priorities.
- Robust assessment systems hold teachers accountable for their pupils' progress and ensure that pupils who are falling behind are identified quickly and receive additional help to catch up.
- Staff have embraced the headteacher's high expectations and appreciate the supportive way in which improvement initiatives are implemented and monitored. Morale is high.
- Although there is no deputy or assistant headteacher, the headteacher has strengthened the school's capacity to improve by developing the skills of senior teachers. These individuals are now substantially involved in checking aspects of the school's work and are making a good contribution to school improvement. While a thorough programme to extend the skills of middle leaders is being implemented, these individuals are at an earlier stage of development.
- Self-evaluation is mostly accurate and leads to the correct priorities for improvement. However, some parts of the school's development plan are not focused sharply enough on measuring the impact of initiatives on pupils' achievement.
- The curriculum promotes literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills well across a range of subjects. A good range of visits and enrichment activities in and outside of school hours adds depth to pupils' learning and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- An excellent partnership has been established with a local specialist sports college to enable staff training to enhance standards and provision in physical education to promote pupils' well-being.
- Partnership with parents is strong. The vast majority of parents value highly the school's work in supporting their children's learning and personal development.
- The local authority provides the school with good support. The School Improvement Partner knows the school well and has worked very successfully with the headteacher in tailoring training to improve teaching and to develop subject and other leadership roles.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is strong. Governors visit the school frequently and have established good links with leaders to enhance their understanding of the impact of the school's work on pupils' achievement and personal development, including the difference made by the pupil premium funding. They know how the new sports funding is being spent and the anticipated impact this will have on improving the school's provision and outcomes for pupils.
 - Governors have undertaken regular training, including about performance data, which has enabled them to ask challenging questions of school leaders about the quality of teaching and how this is improving the learning of different groups of pupils.
 - Governors manage finances effectively. They use information from appraisal to ensure that pay increases are awarded on the basis of teachers' performance in improving pupils' achievement.
 - Governors ensure safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and pupils are kept safe.

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	104894
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	426071

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Canon P Green
Headteacher	Ms V Ainsworth-Brown
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2012
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