

St Ambrose RC Primary School

Princess Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, M21 7QA

Inspection dates

5–6 November 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 including governors, support the headteacher well. Together they have improved the school's performance since the last inspection. Teaching is now consistently good and as a result, pupils of all ages achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress from their below-average starting points. Children get off to a good start in Nursery because staff get to know children's needs well and have good relationships with parents.
- Teachers provide interesting activities in lessons which motivate and encourage pupils to learn and work well together.
- Standards by the end of Year 6 are average and are improving. This is due to the good and sometimes outstanding teaching they receive.
- The range of subjects and activities the school offers helps to strongly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- Pupils are well looked after and feel safe. Their good behaviour in lessons and positive relationships with staff and each other help to produce a happy learning environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress of the most-able pupils is not always strong because they are not consistently challenged through all parts of lessons.
- Teachers do not consistently plan for how teaching assistants are to support the specific needs of pupils throughout all parts of lessons.
- Pupils do not always present their number work accurately. Their written work is not always presented well across the subjects.
- Pupils do not always know how to improve their writing, such as through using different types of words.
- Records about pupils' progress are not always easy to understand. As a result, leaders are not always able to build on the success of their actions taken to improve the school.
- Checks to review and compare the achievement of specific groups of pupils, particularly White British, are not always frequent enough to ensure that their achievement and attendance improves.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made 13 visits to lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also looked at responses to a parental questionnaire recently carried out by the school and talked to parents on the school grounds.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors also held discussions with four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and school staff.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s own data on pupils’ current progress, documents relating to the school’s plans for improvement, its procedures for checking the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Pupils’ books were checked by inspectors.
- The school’s breakfast club was visited.

Inspection team

Clarice Nelson-Rowe, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jeremy Barnes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium 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 service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- About half of the pupils are White British. The other half are from a range of minority ethnic groups. This is well above average. The largest group are from Black African backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school operates a breakfast club that is managed by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to raise achievement further by:
 - ensuring the consistency of challenge throughout all parts of a lesson, especially for the most-able, so that they reach the highest levels in their learning
 - improving the consistency of planning by teachers for how the specific needs of pupils are to be met by teaching assistants throughout all parts of a lesson
 - checking and improving pupils' accuracy of presentation of their number work
 - checking and improving the consistency of pupils' overall presentation of written work across a range of subjects, including spelling and helping them to understanding the types of words that they can use to improve their writing.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management further by:
 - simplifying recorded information about pupils' achievement, so that the school can more easily measure and build on the success of its actions taken to improve the school
 - increasing the frequency of checks on specific groups of pupils in the school, particularly for White British pupils, in order to make further improvements for them with regard to attendance and achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the last inspection, pupils' achievement has improved. From their individual starting points pupils of all ages now achieve well because the quality of teaching has improved and is now consistently good.
- Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are below, and sometimes well below those typically expected for their age, particularly in their language development. Due to careful attention by staff to children's varying needs and by working closely with parents, children make good progress overall.
- Pupils enter Year 1 with skills and abilities closer to, but just below, those typically expected for their age. They now make good progress through Years 1 and 2 to reach standards that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, a below-average proportion reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Between Years 3 to 6, most groups of pupils continue to make good progress, including Black African pupils. The standards they reach in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. This represents good progress from their previously lower starting points and pupils are effectively prepared for the next stage of their education. Although writing standards have been weaker overall, they are improving well.
- The proportion of pupils that make expected and better than expected rates of progress, is at least in line with and often above the national figures. However, the picture of good progress is not quite so strong for a few White British pupils because their below average levels of attendance impacts on their achievement.
- The most-able pupils make good progress overall. However, they do not consistently reach the highest levels of which they are capable in lessons. This is due to teachers not always planning to ensure that these pupils are consistently challenged throughout all parts of lessons.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. The school has a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils read widely and often. In the last two years, an above average proportion of pupils in Year 1 pupils have reached the expected standard in a national reading check of their ability to link letters with the sounds they make (known as phonics). This is because the school has developed a good approach to teaching phonics.
- Pupils' progress in writing is good overall. Pupils generally write well in sentences and use punctuation correctly. However, not all pupils consistently present their work well across a range of subjects and some pupils are not always clear about the types of words they can use to improve their writing.
- Pupils make good progress in their mathematical skills due to good teaching, particularly in the older year groups. Pupils show good ability in using mathematics to solve problems. For example, pupils were observed enthusiastically working out the number and types of fireworks they could buy for bonfire night, using a limited amount of money.
- In Year 6 in 2013, most pupils were supported by the pupil premium and known to be eligible for free school meals. Although this makes direct comparisons of their attainment with the very few pupils who were not eligible unreliable, their attainment was in line with that of similar pupils nationally, in English and mathematics. School data and inspection evidence shows that currently throughout the school, there are few gaps between the progress of pupils supported by the pupil premium and that of others. This reflects the school's successful promotion of equality of opportunity.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs all make good progress throughout the school from their varying, but generally lower individual starting points. They are supported well by skilful teaching assistants.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching is consistently good, with some that is outstanding.
- Lessons are well designed to include activities that inspire pupils to learn and encourage them to work well in groups or pairs. This is a great strength of teaching across the school.
- Pupils are given rich opportunities to develop good and sometimes outstanding aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness in lessons. Pupils' books, displays and activities in lessons, show examples of pupils reflecting on symbolism, meanings of stories, and festivals from different religions. Drama is also used well to explore issues such as justice.
- Teachers' use of questioning is good. Pupils are encouraged to think deeply and respond well in lessons. For example, adults in Nursery were observed asking children questions about what a teddy bear was feeling and why. They encouraged children to think about emotions and to improve their communication skills with each other.
- Homework is used well to build on what pupils already know or to get pupils to find out new things for themselves. Pupils say they enjoy challenges and projects given by teachers.
- Teaching assistants are skilled. When given the opportunity in lessons, they are able to adapt activities well for the pupils they are asked to support. They provide good encouragement for pupils to do their best. Some teachers however, do not make it clear in their planning about their expectations of assistants throughout all parts of lessons. This occasionally hinders progress, particularly for those pupils with specific needs.
- Most teachers regularly check on the progress pupils are making in the lesson and adapt activities to further support or challenge them. However, not all teachers adapt or plan activities enough to stretch the most-able pupils throughout all parts of lessons and to move them on more quickly to tasks that will challenge them and enable them to reach the highest levels in their learning.
- Marking is good overall. It is accurate and consistent as teachers inform pupils of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are also encouraged to check their own work against a list of key features that the teacher is looking for.
- The usual high expectations of presentation and accuracy in work such as spelling and placing numbers neatly in their correct spaces are not always consistently reinforced by some teachers across all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**is good**

- Classrooms are filled with pupils who work hard and are eager to succeed. Their good attitudes to learning helps to create a positive climate around the school.
- Pupils from different cultural backgrounds get on well together and enjoy good relationships with adults throughout the school. Pupils also say they enjoy the strong care and support of supervisors at lunchtime, as well as teaching assistants who run the breakfast club. Pupils feel well cared for and safe at school.
- Pupils show a good understanding of the different forms of discrimination and bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe including road, bike, and water safety. Older pupils are particularly knowledgeable about Internet safety and the importance of not responding to requests to post pictures of themselves via the Internet.
- Attendance is average and improving. The school has worked well to improve the attendance of groups, but there still remains a small minority of pupils who are not attending school regularly as they should, particularly some White British pupils, and this is affecting their progress.
- Pupils say that most pupils behave well in lessons but occasionally the usual good levels of behaviour are not always as consistent outside of classrooms. School logs on behaviour confirm that a very few pupils experience difficulty with managing their own behaviour. However, staff manage these pupils well. The school has good support in place that helps to support and improve the behaviour of specific pupils. For example, the school is making good use of the new primary school sports funding to target some pupils to work with sports coaches at lunchtimes,

in order improve their emotional and physical well-being.

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is supported well by good senior and subject leaders, governors and dedicated staff. Together, they have taken action that has successfully led to improvements in attendance, teaching, governance, subject leadership and consequently pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher has ensured that procedures to appoint the staff to the school have improved the quality of teaching. He has also ensured that leaders and managers at all levels are well-trained and able to carry out their roles effectively.
- The school checks on teachers' performance and rewards them appropriately for their work. School leaders have raised their expectations of what can be achieved. They now set more challenging targets for staff in order to raise pupils' achievement further. They support staff to improve their teaching through a wide range of training opportunities with other schools as well as through sharing best practice with each other within the school.
- The school has an accurate view of its overall performance. However, the school's information showing the achievement and attendance of pupils does not easily or consistently highlight how well the varying groups of pupils are doing, both throughout the school and compared to each other. As a result, the school cannot measure and build on the success of its action taken to improve the school regularly and easily. Also, it means that the school is not always fully aware of how well some groups are doing, which is particularly the case for White British pupils.
- The range of subjects taught is effective in promoting strong personal development and awareness of the wider world. Pupils have a good understanding of the multi-cultural and multi-religious world in which they live. They also enjoy taking part in a range of city-wide musical performances.
- The new primary school sports funding is helping to improve the well-being of specific groups of pupils, as well as improving the number of pupils taking part in sports competitions. Teachers are also benefiting well from training to improve sports lessons for pupils.
- The local authority has provided effective support in helping the school to improve since the last inspection including how to gain an accurate view of how well it is doing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Due to new appointments to the governing body since the last inspection, the quality of governance has improved. The governing body is now made up of people from a range of backgrounds and experience, including in school improvement. They are aware of the quality of teaching and how well pupils are achieving compared to the national picture. They hold all staff to account through the performance management procedures and link this closely to their pay progression. Governors have a clear understanding of how funding such as the pupil premium and sports funding is allocated and its successful impact on improving achievement and well-being. The governing body makes sure the school meets its statutory safeguarding requirements and is highly supportive of everyone in school.

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	426087
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	105520

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Arnold
Headteacher	Charles Flannery
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2011
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