

# St Mary's RC Primary School

Clive Road, Failsworth, Manchester, Lancashire, M35 0NN

**Inspection dates** 5–6 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- The vast majority of pupils make good progress and achieve standards which are higher than the national average by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 is significantly above the national average.
- Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make good progress from their generally low starting points.
- Phonics, the links between letters and sounds, is taught well and standards have significantly improved since 2012.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have increasingly high aspirations for their pupils and are determined to ensure that they achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy learning. They are very courteous and polite and are proud to show visitors around their school. Pupils' good behaviour in class contributes to their good overall achievement.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team know their school well. They are clear on what has to be done in order to move the school forward, and ensure that standards are improving rapidly.
- Senior leaders and governors have ensured that the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
- The vast majority of parents agree that children are safe, happy in school, and progressing well.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils, especially the most able, are not always sufficiently challenged to think hard and apply their understanding.
- Occasionally, teachers are over-reliant on the use of worksheets and provide too few opportunities for pupils to work independently
- Guidance to pupils on how to improve their work is not always precise enough to ensure that all pupils continually improve.
- The rigour with which teachers are held to account is not always linked precisely enough to the performance of pupils.
- Actions planned by senior leaders aiming to improve the school are not always clearly measurable in terms of their impact on learning.

## Information about this inspection

- Twenty two lessons, as well as small group activities, parts of lessons, and phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) sessions, were observed.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 2, 3, 5 and 6 and held discussions with three groups of pupils from across the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and carried out a further detailed scrutiny of pupils' books.
- Inspectors considered 26 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), as well as the school's own surveys of parents' views, and questionnaires completed by 32 members of staff.
- A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority, and a telephone conversation took place with the school's independent consultant.
- A meeting was held with four governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body.
- Various school documents were examined. These included, minutes of the governing body meetings, records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records, safeguarding documentation, data on pupils' progress, monitoring records of the quality of teaching, external school evaluations, the school's development plan and the school's review of its own performance.

## Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Chris Maloney

Additional Inspector

Rajinder Harrison

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an above average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium is below 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 proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school offers a breakfast club and after school sports activities, both of which are managed by the governing body.
- Since the last inspection, the school has recruited a number of new governors and staff members, including six teachers. During the inspection, the headteacher was on a 'phased retirement' plan, with the deputy headteacher taking on the headteacher's responsibilities for part of the week.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better to ensure that even more pupils make good rather than expected progress by:
  - ensuring that all lessons include challenging tasks and questions to stretch all pupils to think hard and apply their understanding, especially for the most able
  - reducing the amount of worksheets used in lessons so that pupils have more opportunity to work things out for themselves and record work independently
  - ensuring that marking is consistently good and gives clear guide-lines to pupils on how to improve.
- Strengthening and improving the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - holding teachers more rigorously to account for the achievement of pupils
  - ensuring that all actions planned to improve the school are clearly measurable in terms of their impact on learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the nursery with skills and abilities which are generally lower than those expected for their age. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, and leave reception having achieved a good level of development.
- Good teaching overall and carefully targeted support has helped to ensure that pupils' performance in Key Stage 1 in 2013 improved significantly in reading, writing and mathematics, and was much better than in the previous two academic years.
- The vast majority of pupils make good progress through Key Stage 2 and attain standards by the end of Year 6 which are better than the national average. Mathematics is especially strong and the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in this subject is significantly higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in reading by the end of Key Stage 2 is higher than the national average. However, writing is not quite as good, and though rapidly improving, is below the national average.
- The school has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity. The school ensures that no pupils are disadvantaged because of their family background and provides a good range of initiatives, including booster support lessons, which ensure that pupils who are in receipt of pupil premium funding, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, achieve better than similar groups of pupils nationally. They are currently, on average, one term behind their classmates, but are rapidly catching up.
- Overall, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. The school has been careful to identify through its regular pupils' progress meetings, any pupils who may be falling behind, and providing support where it is needed.
- The performance of pupils from minority ethnic groups, and those who speak English as an additional language is closely checked. They make good progress, and their attainment is at least equal to that of their peers in school.
- Phonics teaching is good, and has improved significantly over the last two years. Good teacher and teaching assistant training and the introduction of a systematic programme to improve reading and writing have ensured pupils' reading skills are good. Those pupils who read for inspectors enjoyed reading and used a range of strategies to identify and read unfamiliar words.
- The school has been careful to ensure that there are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls, and that any gaps are narrower than those found nationally.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Most lessons observed during the inspection were good, although some required improvement. A detailed scrutiny of pupils' work showed that teaching is typically good overtime.
- In the best lessons, teachers are very clear about what pupils will learn and have high expectations as to what they can achieve. This was the case in a good Year 3 English lesson, where the teacher provided an atmospheric environment with stimulating visual and audio effects linked to 'a haunted house' theme. Pupils were very excited and purposeful in their writing and produced high quality sentences, including 'I can smell a bomb-fire burning like a dragon's breath'.
- The majority of lessons progress at a good pace and engage all groups of pupils, providing activities which are set at just the right level. Typically, teachers' review what pupils have already learned, and check their understanding before moving on to the main focus of the lesson. This was the case in a good mathematics lesson in Year 1 where pupils were challenged to count money, and add pairs of number together.
- However, not all lessons provide enough challenge, particularly for the most able who

occasionally find work too easy. In such lessons, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to think hard and apply their understanding.

- Most pupils know the levels that they are working at, and how to improve their learning. This is especially the case with Key Stage 2 pupils who were very keen to talk to inspectors about how they have improved. Typically, pupils know that they can improve their English by 'using better S.O.A.P' (spelling, onomatopoeia, alliteration and punctuation).
- Teachers aim to ensure that lessons are exciting and interesting. This was the case in a good Year 6 English lesson where pupils were asked to taste a sour sweet, to describe its taste, write an advertisement for the radio and then 'pitch' it to an audience. However, at times, pupils' learning is over-reliant on worksheets, providing too few opportunities for them to be involved in such independent work.
- Overall, the quality of marking is good, with examples of teachers providing extended comments, which are responded to by pupils and followed up with discussions with teachers and teaching assistants. However, marking is inconsistent, and does not always identify clearly enough how pupils can improve their learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils enjoy learning, and their behaviour in all parts of the school is good. They are proud of their school and enjoy showing visitors around. Many of those who spoke with inspectors said that the best thing about their school is 'the learning'. This is supported by their good and improving attendance and the popularity of the school's breakfast club and after-school clubs.
- Pupils' behaviour in class is consistently good, they follow instructions well and settle into learning activities quickly. Pupils form very tight friendship bonds and work exceptionally well together in class.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and that behaviour is usually good. Younger pupils demonstrated a good understanding of road safety and 'stranger danger', older pupils were aware of the dangers of using the internet, and how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils know what discriminatory behaviour is and know that it is wrong to treat anyone differently because of the colour of their skin, religion, where they come from, or because they are different. They were adamant that any such behaviour would be taken seriously if reported to adults.
- The majority of parents who completed Parent View, and the school's own surveys of parents' views, as well as those parents who spoke with inspectors were of the opinion that behaviour is good most of the time. They also indicated that they thought their children were very safe, and that they were making good progress.
- Pupils are very mature and enjoy taking on board responsibilities as, for example, prefects and school council members. Many display high levels of confidence and talk with authority about, for example, their 'assertive mentoring' files and what they are learning.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of cyber bullying, and know that this can happen through the internet and on mobile phones. The majority of pupils said that bullying is rare in the school. This is confirmed by the school's own behaviour logs. However, some pupils reported that bullying does sometimes take place. Younger pupils reported that older pupils could 'be mean sometimes', but indicated that this was rare and they would always talk to adults if they had any concerns.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The school is currently in a state of transition, with the deputy headteacher taking on board the headteacher's responsibilities for part of the week as part of a 'phased retirement'. This arrangement works well and, together with two able assistant headteacher and other senior teachers, the senior leadership team is clearly focused, and committed to driving the school

forward.

- The senior leadership team and governors have had to take some difficult decisions to ensure that teaching continually raises the standard of pupils' achievement. As a result, the performance of pupils in 2013 was significantly above that of the two previous academic years, and continues to improve.
- Teachers are eager to ensure that they perform to the best of their ability, they are dedicated to meeting the needs of pupils and are appreciative of the opportunities that they have had for their professional development, which they say has helped to improve their teaching practice.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in reading and mathematics across a broad range of subjects, including religious education, geography, art, science and history. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Most aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural are developed well. The school is currently exploring ways to further develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures and traditions.
- The school works closely with an education consultant who has recently provided support in carrying out a review of Teaching in Key Stage 1. The local authority provides light-touch support and has also supported the school in improving the overall quality of teaching.
- The overwhelming majority of staff who completed the inspection questionnaire said that they were clear about what the school is trying to achieve. However, teachers are not held rigorously enough to account for the achievement of pupils and their performance management is not linked closely enough to individual teacher targets.
- The introduction of an assertive mentoring programme, a well-structured approach to the teaching of reading and writing, regular monitoring of pupils' progress and generating an excitement about, and love of mathematics have all helped to raise levels of achievement. However, not all actions planned by senior leaders and governors to improve the school are clearly measurable in terms of their impact on pupils' learning.
- Safeguarding procedures are followed closely and meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are aware of the range of school activities funded through the pupil premium, and know that, for example, it is well spent on small-group teaching activities, which help to raise levels of attainment for entitled pupils. They have taken decisive action to ensure that the quality of teaching is good, and are careful to ensure that pay awards are linked to teachers' performance. New governors have benefited from induction training, and indicated that this has helped them perform their various roles on the governing body.
  - Governors demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that the school continually improves, and know that pupils' achievement in mathematics is good. However, although they agree to the headteacher's performance management priorities, their knowledge of exactly what the school needs to do to secure further improvements is still developing.
  - Governors have agreed for the school's new government funding (Primary School Sport) for physical education and sport to be spent on, amongst other things, developing teachers' sports coaching skills.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105727
<b>Local authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	426226

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	455
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs C Williamson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs B Cunningham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 September 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 6816663
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