

Accrington St Mary Magdalen's Church of England Primary School

Devonshire Street, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 1DW

Inspection dates 17–18 December 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement requires improvement because teaching has not been good enough for long enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics between Years 1 and 6.
- Too few pupils make more than expected progress in mathematics by the time they leave school in Year 6.
- In some lessons, pupils do not have enough time to concentrate on tasks that are at the correct level of challenge. Nor do they have the opportunity to follow the guidance given to them when their work has been marked.
- Teaching assistants are not always effectively deployed throughout the whole lesson.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise mathematical skills across other subjects, and in some lessons pupils repeat work that they can already do.
- The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is not fully reliable and does not easily identify the progress made by specific groups in school.
- Actions taken by school leaders have not yet resulted in the quality of teaching or pupils' achievement being consistently good; consequently, the school has not improved quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Reception class make good progress.
- The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in reading and writing at the end of Year 6 has improved.
- The quality of teaching is improving.
- Behaviour is good, pupils feel safe, they have a good attitude to their learning and their attendance is improving.
- The school gives good attention to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher has a clear idea of the direction that she wants the school to take. She is well supported by school leaders including governors and the staff team. This is ensuring that effective actions are securing school improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 parts of lessons and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of a letter received from a parent, 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), 12 responses to a staff questionnaire and pupils' responses to a questionnaire recently distributed by the school.
- A range of documents were considered by inspectors, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also examined work in pupils' books.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter McKay

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary Magdalen is smaller than most primary schools, though the number of pupils is increasing.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well-above average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from services families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are from a White British heritage and do not speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils 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.
- Since the previous inspection there have been a number of changes to staff.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that:
 - pupils have enough time to get on with tasks set at the correct level of challenge
 - teachers check that pupils always follow the good guidance that they provide through their marking of pupils' work
 - the skills of teaching assistants are used well throughout the whole lesson.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by ensuring that:
 - mathematical skills are developed in a systematic way as pupils progress through school
 - more opportunities are provided to practise mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Further develop leadership and management by securing a good system for tracking pupils' progress and using it to identify the progress of individuals and groups of pupils so that actions can be taken to address any underachievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The progress that pupils make between Year 1 and Year 6 varies too much between classes and subjects. Therefore, achievement requires improvement.
- Children usually start school in Reception class with skills that are well below those typically expected. For the last two years most children have made excellent progress and entered Year 1 with the range of skills and abilities expected for their age. However, this has not always been the case and some cohorts currently in school have entered Key Stage 1 having made good progress from their relative starting points, but at below age-related expectations.
- In 2012 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics dipped to well-below national levels at the end of Year 2. It improved this year but remains below national levels. School leaders have taken decisive action to improve standards in Key Stage 1 and work seen in pupils' books corroborates the school's view that this improvement will continue.
- Test results at the end of Key Stage 2 show an improving trend since 2011 from significantly below average to broadly average in writing and slightly below average in reading and mathematics.
- Most pupils now make the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in reading and writing is increasing and climbed above national levels in 2013.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise mathematical skills across other subjects. Some pupils repeat work that they can already do because school planning for mathematics does not always ensure that mathematical skills are developed in a systematic way. By the time they leave school at the end Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in mathematics is below national levels.
- The results of the Year 1 check on phonics (matching letters and the sounds that they make) improved in 2013. School leaders recognised that more needed to be done to improve reading across the school. They purchased new reading books, which pupils enjoy; this encourages them to read more widely and often. Pupils who read to inspectors did so confidently. They said that their teachers help them with their reading and that they have the opportunity to read every day.
- The school now provides focused support for the most-able pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and there is evidence of pockets of good achievement across the school. However, the progress that these groups of pupils make is uneven and as such reflects the progress of other pupils in school.
- Unconfirmed national data for pupils leaving school at the end of Year 6 in 2013 indicates that those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals made good progress from their starting points, comparing favourably with progress made by pupils nationally. The school's progress information shows achievement of eligible pupils overall is similar to other pupils in school in that it is uneven across the year groups and between subjects and, therefore, requires improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching reading, writing and mathematics is not consistently good between Year 1 and Year 6. It requires improvement because it has not underpinned sustained good progress for pupils. However, the quality of teaching is improving and most of the teaching seen during the inspection was of a good standard.
- In some lessons, the most able pupils can already do the work that has been planned for them, whilst others do not fully understand what the teacher is talking about or the tasks that they are about to attempt. As a result, some pupils do not get on quickly enough with their work and this stops them from making as much progress as possible.
- Teachers mark work in pupils' books regularly and offer good advice to pupils on how to improve

their work. However, teachers do not always check that pupils are learning from their mistakes by following the guidance given, when they tackle their next piece of work.

- Teaching assistants are well trained and provide a good level of support to small groups and individual pupils. However, their skills are not always used effectively when teachers are introducing the lesson.
- Pupils' progress is fastest when teachers build effectively on prior learning and model new learning well. They plan tasks that are well matched to the abilities of all pupils and exploit opportunities to practise reading and writing skills across other subjects. Moreover, teachers skilfully pose questions that help them assess pupils' understanding and make pupils think carefully about their learning.
- Children get off to a successful start in Reception class because teaching is good and activities are well planned. The teaching of writing is particularly effective and work in children's books shows that they very quickly learn a firm pencil grip and how to form their letters. During one lesson some children were enthusiastically writing whole words correctly when it was clear that they were making loosely controlled marks just a few months earlier.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are respectful and polite towards each other and the adults around them. Behaviour was good during the inspection and school records show that this is the norm. Disruptions to lessons are rare. However, the attention of a few pupils can drift when they are not sufficiently challenged during a lesson.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and the difference between bullying and falling out. They are sure that there is very little bullying and that should it happen an adult would effectively deal with it. This helps pupils to feel safe in and around the school.
- There is a range of opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of responsibility and contribute to the school community. Older pupils act as 'Pals', their bright yellow jackets show that they are available to lead games and talk to other pupils in the playground.
- The school council regularly helps to raise funds which are then donated to charity or used to buy additional equipment for school. For example, pupils are proud of their playground because they were able to choose some of the equipment and ground markings and contribute toward the cost.
- The primary school sport funding has been used to employ a specialist teacher. He is coaching school staff so that they can teach sporting activities to a higher standard. He is also developing close links with the local high school and sports clubs. As a result more pupils are participating in a wider range of sporting activities to help them stay healthy and promote well-being.
- The majority of parents responding to the Parent View questionnaire were positive about how behaviour is managed at St Mary Magdalen's and feel that their children are well cared for at the school.
- Attendance has improved to average levels. This is as a result of effective partnership working between the school and parents and it also reflects pupils' enjoyment of school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The actions taken by school leaders to improve standards have not yet had time to have a sustained positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. As a result leadership and management require improvement.
- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the school and has a clear view of how successful it can be. However, she has had to steer the school through a turbulent period including a number of staff changes. She has worked hard to develop what is now a cohesive, supportive staff team.
- The school's analysis of how well it is doing is over-generous. However, the school development plan is focused on addressing appropriate priorities and although standards are not yet

consistently good they are improving. This demonstrates that the school is in a position to improve further.

- The school's system for collecting pupil progress information is not entirely reliable. There are aspects of data missing and some progress scores differ from those recorded in other sources. It does not easily support the analysis of achievement of specific pupil groups. Consequently, it is difficult for leaders to confidently assess progress and quickly make changes when needed.
- Regular checks of learning and teaching are undertaken by senior and subject leaders and changes made to improve teaching. Staff are supported well by a programme of training to match school priorities and the developmental needs of individual members of staff.
- There is a focus on improving standards in English and mathematics. Subject leaders are very new to post. They know the direction that they want their subjects to take and have the skills and determination to achieve their goals. Although they have introduced new resources and interventions they have not been in post long enough to secure sustained improvement in these subjects. As a result the curriculum, particularly in mathematics, does not yet entirely meet the needs of all pupils and so requires improvement.
- Curriculum enrichment is good. There are a variety of after-school activities available to pupils and they really enjoy the extensive range of visitors to school. For example, pupils spoke enthusiastically about the travelling farm and the visiting poet, both left a lasting impression. The school is fully committed to ensuring that all pupils have equal access to everything that it has to offer.
- The school contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils are regularly encouraged to consider how others are feeling. This was evident during the school assembly when pupils thought really hard about the feelings of those involved in the Christmas story.
- The school currently receives light touch support from the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body are very supportive of the school. They know the school because they visit regularly and receive reports from school leaders and governors linked to specific aspects of the school's work. Governors regularly take up training opportunities and plan to access further training to help develop their skills in analysing national data so that they can hold school leaders even more rigorously to account. Governors have an overview of the quality of teaching and how it is linked to the salary structure. Governors check that pupil premium funding is spent wisely and used to narrow achievement gaps between pupils eligible for funding and those who are not. They also check that the new sports funding is used to bring about improved access to sporting activities. The governing body make sure that statutory responsibilities such as safeguarding are met.

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	119446
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	428868

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorna Kenyon
Headteacher	Karen Hardman
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2012
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