

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Fleetwood

London Street, Fleetwood, Lancashire, FY7 6EU

Inspection dates 10–11 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.

- Standards over time have been below national levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in writing are still not high enough.
- Progress throughout the school is too variable and too few pupils make consistently good progress.
- There is not yet enough good and better teaching because the best teaching is not used well enough as a model for all lessons. The most able pupils do not make the progress they should in lessons and teachers' marking is not as effective as it should be.
- Over time, the checking of teaching quality by the school's leaders has not been as robust as it should be to bring rapid improvement in pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well in lessons. They are keen to learn. They feel safe and well cared for in school.
- Standards in mathematics have improved since the previous inspection.
- Pupils supported by pupil premium funding make good progress by the end of Year 6 from their starting points.
- New leadership has set the school on an improving path. The management of teaching has strengthened and recent improvement is evident.
- Governance has improved since the previous inspection due to a well-planned training programme. Governors know the school well and challenge it effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons or part lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of 19 parents who completed the online questionnaire Parent View were taken into account.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a wide range of documentation including: national assessment data and the schools' own assessments; samples of pupils' work; the school's own view of its work; minutes from governing body meetings and safeguarding information.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gillian Hunter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized school in which most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is below average.
- An above average proportion of pupils are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets current floor standards, which are the minimum government expectations for attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- A breakfast club is provided for pupils during term time.
- The associate headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2013 and supports the school on a part-time basis. The acting headteacher took up her appointment in November 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise standards, especially in writing, and to increase the rate of progress for all pupils, the school should improve the quality of teaching so that it becomes consistently good or better by:
 - making sure that the most able pupils are always challenged to the limits of their abilities at every opportunity
 - insisting on correct punctuation and grammar and spelling
 - giving pupils more chances to work on their own without always relying on their teacher to show them what to do
 - keeping up a good pace of learning in all lessons
 - improving the effectiveness of teachers' marking by always making it clear what pupils need to do to improve and giving pupils time and opportunity to respond to the guidance they get
 - using the best teaching consistently as a model for teaching in all lessons.
- Improve leadership and management by checking the quality of teaching and learning regularly and robustly and by following up identified weaknesses quickly to bring rapid improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills that are generally well-below typical expectations for their age. They are well cared for and their learning and development are supported well through the variety of activities provided for them. Early reading and communication skills are a particular focus along with children's social development. They gain confidence quickly in those areas. Their abilities overall are still below expectations when they leave Reception, having made expected progress.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are below average and have not improved quickly enough over the past four years. Standards in writing are particularly low. School assessments and samples of pupils' current work, however, indicate a general upturn in standards with an increased number on track to reach the higher Level 3 in writing and mathematics.
- Results of the phonics (linking letters and sounds they make) screening test for Year 1 pupils improved in 2013. The proportion reaching the expected standard was above the national figure. This is now beginning to show a positive impact.
- Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are too variable and have been over time. In the most recent national tests mathematics improved to broadly average but writing dipped to significantly below average. Pupils did not perform well in their spelling, punctuation and grammar test. School leaders are aware that this is a main area for the school to tackle and scrutiny of pupils' work confirms this.
- Progress in Years 3 to 6 is not consistently good. Pupils in the upper junior classes make better progress because more is expected of them and teaching is generally stronger. Uneven progress between classes means that pupils do not make expected or better progress in all subjects by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils in Year 2 enjoy reading and their confidence is growing as they successfully use their phonics skills to sound out unfamiliar words. They read regularly at home where there is good support from parents. Reading standards show improvement at the end of Year 6. Pupils are enthusiastic about books. They read fluently and with good understanding of some of the deeper meanings of what they read.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs mostly make expected progress. Their individual plans for learning are carefully mapped out and their progress is checked continually. There is a wide range of support through group and individual teaching to help boost their achievement.
- The most able pupils do not make the progress they should, especially in writing. Although some pupils are being identified and challenged, as seen, for example, in a Year 2 writing group, this has not been evident over time. Assessments show that too few have reached levels expected of them in writing at both key stages.
- Those who are supported by pupil premium funding benefit well from the additional teaching support provided by the school. The gaps between their and others' attainment at the end of Year 2 closed significantly by the end of Year 6. Indeed, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals did slightly better than others in reading and mathematics in 2013 and achievement in writing was very similar. However, in punctuation, spelling and grammar results show the group to be about the equivalent of two terms behind others in their expected achievement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too uneven across the school. While there are pockets of good teaching, more so because of the recent impact of the new school leaders, there is not enough teaching that is outstanding.
- Although an example of outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection, leaders' records

show that it is not yet a regular occurrence throughout the school. The very best practice is not sufficiently shared so that teaching in all lessons improves more quickly.

- The teaching of literacy and numeracy requires improvement in order to raise standards. Although mathematics standards show improvement, teaching over time and currently lacks the necessary consistency. The strongest teaching is in the class for the oldest pupils where a lot of ground is made up. Teachers are beginning to plan more practical uses of mathematical skills in different ways across subjects as well as better opportunities for pupils to extend the range of their writing across the curriculum.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and there is some very good practice in marking that pupils appreciate and find helpful. Again, this is not seen throughout the whole school. Some marking is overgenerous in the comments made. Too often pupils are not shown how to improve work so marking does not sufficiently raise expectations. Pupils are not given time to think about teachers' comments and correct errors before moving on to new targets.
- The most effective learning happens when teachers plan thoughtfully, building on what has gone before, and taking account of pupils' varying abilities. Pupils are motivated because the challenges are set at the right level so they make progress in the lesson and gain a sense of achievement.
- Sometimes the rate of progress is slower, for example, when work is not well matched so that either too much or too little is expected of the pupils. There are times, also, when activity could start earlier in the lesson for some pupils. The most able pupils, for instance, are not challenged enough to work on their own or in a group without direct support so that their skills and abilities are tested to the full.
- Teachers use resources effectively and use a range of methods such as music or video clips to boost imaginations and interest. Electronic whiteboards are used confidently and teachers' subject knowledge is generally sound. Laptops feature well in lessons to help pupils learn.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They work well with class teachers in planning and checking the progress in lessons. Those who work with smaller groups, such as pupils with special educational needs, know the pupils' abilities well and deal sensitively with their particular needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They enjoy lessons and are keen to do well. They listen to their teachers and work hard.
- They particularly enjoy the range of sports activities provided during and outside of lesson time. These help pupils to achieve well in inter-school tournaments and greatly benefit their enthusiasm for sport as well as their physical well-being.
- Their behaviour around the school is good. They are well mannered in the dining room and enjoy the social time with friends. In the playground they are active and play safely with the equipment provided.
- Pupils give their own behaviour, 'Eight out of ten.' They say that they feel safe in the playground and that occasional disputes and 'falling out' are not too problematic and quickly dealt with. Pupils have a clear understanding of the different kinds of bullying that can occur, including cyber-bullying and are aware of possible dangers they might have to face outside of school. Relationships with adults and with each other are positive.
- Parents agree that their children are cared for well in school. They appreciate the breakfast club which provides a welcoming and safe start to the day as well as helping some pupils to get into school on time.
- Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school. The school's strong Christian values are reflected in pupils' politeness and good manners and their consideration of others in the way that they donate generously to various charities. Pupils are friendly and confident. Older pupils are very mindful of the needs of younger ones. The eco club is watchful over recycling of paper and how much energy the school uses. Pupils are invited to voice their ideas about school

matters by writing down their suggestions which are discussed at regular intervals.

- By the end of Year 6 pupils are well prepared socially and emotionally to move on to the next stage of their education.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The school has not fully addressed all the issues raised in the previous report. Consequently, it has not improved fast enough and more work needs to be done to be good. Improvements particularly over the last year mean that the school demonstrates that it can improve further.
- A significant shortcoming is that the quality of teaching has not been monitored robustly enough. Teachers have not always received constructive support to help them improve their practice.
- Staff members have responded well to the recent change in the school's leadership and work with a common drive to bring improvement.
- Senior leaders' responsibilities are clear. Their focus is set firmly on the achievement of all groups of pupils. Leadership training has placed the team in a strong position to help move the school on at a faster pace under the support and guidance from the new headteacher.
- The school has responded well to local authority help since the previous inspection. This has led to standards beginning to rise in mathematics and improved leadership in that subject. The local authority is confident in the current headteacher's ability to accelerate the rate of improvement and to raise pupils' achievement to good.
- Central to the school's improvement is the drive to improve teaching quality. There have already been improvements in the proportion of good teaching over the term because of more robust checking, training and support provided, along with higher expectations. Leaders know, however, that there is still some way to go. Teachers' performance management is well organised and clearly underpinned by the Teachers' Standards.
- The work of middle managers (subject leaders) is effectively maintaining an engaging curriculum for the pupils. Some leadership training has been undertaken, but changes in some leadership roles means that the programme of development is on-going. Where leadership is more established, for example in mathematics and physical education, the outcomes for pupils are better.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body works effectively with the school and is clear about its future direction. Governors began immediately to tackle previous inspection issues and have overseen some progress in mathematics. Through relevant training they have strengthened their effectiveness and are better able to analyse national data, check the school's progress and challenge it on its performance. Governors are aware of the overall teaching quality in the school and where the strengths and weaknesses lie. They oversee performance management efficiently and how that is linked to the salaries structure. The uses of pupil premium funding and primary schools sports funding are carefully planned. The progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is checked rigorously to make sure that there is equality of opportunity for all pupils. Governors understand the importance of achieving sustainable good quality teaching in physical education in the future and are discussing plans to check the impact that sports funding has on teaching and standards in the school. Statutory duties regarding policies and financial management are carried out efficiently and safeguarding arrangements meet all government 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	119623
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	426157

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	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Therese Donnelly
Headteacher	Mark Rogan
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2011
Telephone number	01253 878445
Fax number	01253 878464
Email address	head@st-marys-fleetwood.lancs.sch.uk

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