

# Blackpool St Nicholas CofE Primary School

School Road, Marton Moss, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY4 5DS

**Inspection dates** 3–4 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- Pupils do not progress at an evenly good rate between Year 1 and Year 6.
- There are too few pupils making consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Not enough teaching is good or better because teachers do not always question pupils carefully enough to deepen learning or assess their level of understanding.
- Most-able pupils are not always expected to get on with their next challenge soon enough.
- Teachers do not always check that pupils follow the good advice that they provide in their written comments or complete their corrections.
- There are times when teaching assistants are not utilised effectively throughout the lesson.
- Targets in the school planning document are not always sufficiently precise and measurable to give a clear picture of how well the school is doing. As a result, leaders and governors have not ensured that the school is improving fast enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are polite and considerate. They show respect for one another and the adults around them.
- Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe because they know that they are well cared for.
- Attendance is improving.
- Children get off to a successful start in the Reception class.
- The quality of teaching is improving and there are examples of good and outstanding teaching across the school.
- Leaders, including governors, know what needs to be done to move the school forward.
- The curriculum provides a range of exciting enrichment activities and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is well developed.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 parts of lessons, three of which were joint observations with senior leaders and sessions taken by teaching assistants. They listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and school staff. A telephone conversation took place between an inspector and the teacher in charge of the Willows Behaviour Support Facility, situated at Mereside Primary School.
- Inspectors took account of a letter received from a parent, 43 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and responses to the staff and parental questionnaires 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
Carol Machell	Additional Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St. Nicholas School is larger than most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding provided for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- Most pupils are from a White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Since the previous inspection, more staff have been appointed to support the increased pupil numbers. The school has grown considerably in size and is now two-form entry.
- 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, especially between Year 1 and Year 6, so that it is consistently good or outstanding and thereby increase the proportion of pupils making at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by making sure that:
  - teachers always carefully question pupils to help assess their learning, deepen their understanding and drive learning forward
  - further opportunities are provided for the most able pupils to get on with more difficult tasks as soon as possible in each lesson
  - teachers check that pupils consistently follow the good guidance that they provide through their marking of work to ensure pupils learn from their mistakes
  - the skills of teaching assistants are used well throughout the whole lesson.
- Further develop the leadership and management, including governance, of the school by:
  - making sure that targets set out in the school development plan are consistently clear, precise and measurable to give the school a clear view of how well it is doing
  - checking that recent initiatives for reading, writing and mathematics are leading to improvements and respond appropriately.

### Inspection judgements

**The achievement of pupils**

**requires improvement**

- Most children enter Year 1 from the Reception class with a range of abilities broadly typical for their age. However, their skills in reading, writing and number are not always as well developed. The progress that pupils then make across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 varies too much between classes and subjects. Too many pupils do not make good progress. Therefore, achievement requires improvement.
- Since 2011, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has remained well below national levels at the end of Year 2, though it improved well this year when compared to last year. As a result of actions taken by school leaders, there is an improving trend in the attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 1. The school's own pupil assessment information and work seen in pupils' books confirm that this improvement is set to continue.
- Test results at the end of Year 6 show that attainment in reading has improved from a position well below national levels in 2011 to broadly average in 2013. Attainment in writing and mathematics has increased slightly but remains broadly average across the last three years.
- Although achievement is variable, the majority of pupils now make the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. However, by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6, too few pupils consistently make better progress than this.
- Children start school in the Reception class with skills and knowledge below those typically expected. They make good progress because staff provide a variety of interesting activities that build on and extend children's learning experience.
- School leaders have introduced a range of additional reading activities. For example, phonics (matching letters to the sounds that they make) is now taught in all year groups. New books and online packages that can be used at home as well as at school have been purchased and a book club, whose members regularly recommend books to others, has been established. As a result, the profile of reading has been raised and pupils are beginning to make progress at a faster rate. However, more work needs to be done.
- The school correctly identified the need to improve the teaching of writing and mathematics. Training to improve teachers' subject knowledge in writing has been provided and pupils are now given more opportunities to write from their own experience and across subjects. Moreover, strategies have been put in place, such as small-group mathematics sessions that are planned weekly to respond quickly to any identified learning need pupils might have. However, these systems have not been in place long enough to impact fully on standards.
- The school now provides focused support for the most able pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and school records now show pockets of excellent achievement. However, overall the progress that these groups of pupils make is inconsistent and, as such, it is similar to that of other pupils in the school.
- The school is successfully closing the gap in attainment between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not. Eligible pupils are half a term behind their non-eligible classmates in mathematics, one term ahead in reading and half a term ahead in writing. This confirms the school's commitment to equal opportunities.

- The quality of teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is uneven between Year 1 and Year 6. It requires improvement because it has not resulted in sustained good progress for pupils. However, the quality of teaching is improving and there are examples of good and outstanding teaching across the school.
- Where teaching requires improvement, the most able pupils do not get on quickly enough with their challenging tasks and this prevents them from making as much progress as possible.
- Some teachers use a limited range of questions that require only very low-level responses. Consequently, they cannot assess pupils' learning accurately enough and learning is not always being developed as well as it might be.
- Teachers' marking has improved. Staff congratulate pupils on what they have done well and regularly give them good guidance on how to improve their work. However, they do not always make sure that pupils learn from their mistakes by correcting errors or following the good advice given.
- In some lessons, teachers use the school's comprehensive pupil assessment information to plan activities that are well matched to the learning needs of all pupils. They provide opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning and continue with their own teacher assessment throughout the lesson by skilfully posing questions that make pupils think hard. What is more, teachers place tasks in a real-world context and give pupils the opportunity to discuss their ideas and reflect on their learning.
- In one outstanding Year 3 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils were learning at a swift pace about estimating the weight of objects. The teacher made sure pupils engaged in an excellent mix of practical and discussion-based activities. She also encouraged pupils to think hard to suggest reasons why the skill being practised would be useful to them. This enabled her to gauge the pupils' level of understanding.
- Teaching assistants provide a good level of support to the pupils that they work with in small groups or in a one-to-one situation. However, they are not always as effectively deployed when the teacher is introducing the lesson.

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

- Behaviour was good during the inspection and school records and discussions show that this is typical. Staff manage behaviour well and disruptions to lessons are few. However, a few pupils can become a little distracted when they are not sufficiently challenged during the lessons.
- A large majority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire were positive about how behaviour is managed at St. Nicholas' and feel that their children are well cared for at the school.
- Pupils are respectful and polite to one another and the adults around them. They feel safe in and around the school, because, as one pupil remarked, 'We have lots of friends and adults that care.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and the difference between bullying and falling out. Pupils are confident that there is very little bullying. If bullying did happen, they say it would be quickly and effectively dealt with by the pupil anti-bullying ambassadors before adults needed to be involved.
- A range of opportunities enables pupils to develop a sense of responsibility and contribute to the school community. Older pupils take on roles such as house captains and head boy and head girl; there are also monitors who have various duties around the school.
- The school councillors help decide upon fund-raising events to buy equipment for school and donate to charity. For example, pupils enjoyed dressing as teachers to raise money for Children in Need. Councillors are currently organising the reindeer run to collect money for a local hospice.
- Pupils enjoy the choice of sporting activities available to them to help them stay healthy and promote well-being. The primary school sport funding is to be allocated to working in partnership with local sporting facilities; for example, football and cricket clubs and a dance

teacher. This is to improve the skills of school staff so that they can teach sporting activities to a higher standard and increase pupil participation in sporting activities.

- The school has worked well with parents to improve attendance and punctuality. Attendance has improved to average levels, which reflects the pupils' enjoyment of school.

## The leadership and management

## require improvement

- The range of actions put into place by senior leaders has not yet had time to have a sustained positive impact on standards at school. Consequently, the school has not successfully addressed all the issues identified in the previous inspection report. As a result, leadership and management require improvement.
- The headteacher has a clear view of the direction that he wants the school to take and has steered the school through a period of significant change, including an increase in pupil and staff numbers. He is well supported by his deputy and the new team of senior and middle leaders. Together they are driving forward improvements to the pupil assessment system, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. This demonstrates that the school is in a position to improve further.
- The school development plan is focused on addressing appropriate priorities set by the school. However, the objectives are not always suitably sharp or measurable to demonstrate how well the school is improving.
- There is now a strong emphasis on the development of English and mathematics skills, but this has not been in place long enough to secure continuous improvement in these subjects across the school.
- Curriculum enrichment is good and pupils make the most of opportunities to take part in sporting, musical and outdoor activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is given good attention and pupils have links with schools in other countries and in another town.
- The school receives an appropriate level of support from the local authority.
- Staff are supported by a programme of training to meet their developmental needs and fit with school priorities. Regular checks of learning and teaching are undertaken by senior and subject leaders. Inconsistencies have been identified and changes made to improve teaching.
- School leaders work effectively in partnership with Mereside Primary School, including Willows Behaviour Support Facility, to meet the needs of pupils whose current circumstances make them vulnerable.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The relatively new governing body is highly supportive of the school and increasingly challenging. Governors are developing their knowledge of what goes on in school through regular visits and receiving reports from school leaders. Governors have engaged in substantial training but are eager to access further training and support to help develop their skills and expertise in challenging senior leaders and holding them more effectively to account. The governing body is aware of the quality of teaching in the school. Governors know that progression through the teacher pay scales must be linked to pupils' progress and have plans to do this. They know about the difference that the pupil premium funding is making for eligible pupils and that the new primary school sport funding is used to bring about improved access to sporting activities. Governors also make sure that their statutory responsibilities are met. For example, systems to safeguard and protect staff and pupils meet requirements and the budget is secure.

## 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>	119594
<b>Local authority</b>	Blackpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	426297

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	390
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carolene Sargeant
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Mellor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 October 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01253 608900
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