

# Fir Bank Primary School

Grasmere Road, Royton, Oldham, OL2 6SJ

**Inspection dates** 12–13 February 2014

<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.

- Pupils make good progress from their sometimes very different starting points and have their individual needs met well. They reach nationally expected standards in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The progress of pupils supported by the pupil premium, including the children in the care of the local authority, matches that of other pupils in the school.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, give clear explanations and provide interesting activities that successfully engage pupils' interests in learning.
- Pupils behave well; they value learning and feel safe in school. They are happy, take care of each other and make friends easily.
- The headteacher sets high expectations and, supported by senior staff and the governing body, checks carefully the work of the school. As a result, there is a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Pupils who join the school at other than the normal times are helped to settle well. The school is calm and supportive and provides a nurturing environment, particularly for those pupils who sometimes find it more difficult than others to engage in learning.
- The need to attend school regularly and on time is well understood by all. As a result, attendance is above average.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of marking varies. Pupils do not always have enough time in lessons to make corrections and act on the advice they are given.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to use the skills they learn in mathematics lessons in other subjects.
- In some lessons, pupils' progress, particularly that of the most able, could be even faster if the challenge was greater and they knew what to do to reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Timescales shown in the school's plans are not tight enough to ensure leaders' actions lead to swift improvements.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons including two with the headteacher.
- The inspectors also looked at examples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read. They observed the teaching of reading skills and talked to pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those that they were currently reading.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils about their work. Inspectors held meetings with four governors. They spoke to a representative of the local authority, the external consultant who works with the school and met with members of the school staff.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 15 responses to staff questionnaires completed during the inspection were also considered.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including external reviews of the school's work, safeguarding documents, records of current standards and progress, the school development plan and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. Minutes of governing body meetings and reports produced by the headteacher were also considered.

## Inspection team

Lyn Pender, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gordon Alston

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most other primary schools. The number of pupils on roll has risen continually since the previous inspection and the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes are now oversubscribed.
- Most pupils are White British with a very small proportion from other heritages. Almost all pupils speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. An above average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is above the national average. This additional funding is provided 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.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils joins the school at other than the normal time. More than 40% of pupils in Year 6 in 2012 and 2103 joined the school during Key Stage 2.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have worked with a number of schools. The headteacher provided for a local school in challenging circumstances. The deputy headteacher was seconded for a year to share his expertise with a not for profit charity that supports vulnerable children and their families.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A breakfast club, after-school club and pre-school setting are provided on site by a private provider. This provision is subject to a separate inspection.

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

- Improve marking so that all pupils know the next steps they need to take to improve their work and have time in lessons to make corrections and act on their teachers' advice.
- Increase the level of challenge in lessons for the most able pupils so that more reach higher levels of attainment.
- Set sharp targets for pupils and review them closely and frequently so that pupils know what levels they have reached and what they need to do to improve further and reach higher levels of attainment.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to apply and practise their mathematical skills in lessons in other subjects.
- Set clear, sharp timescales in the school's plans, so that leaders can check regularly that actions are having swift impact on school improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are usually typical for their age. However, this varies from year to year and sometimes particular weaknesses exist in pupils' literacy and mathematics skills. Good teaching ensures the children settle well into the Reception class and they become happy, curious and highly motivated learners. As a result, children make at least the progress expected of them and the large majority enter Year 1 ready to access the national curriculum.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average, although some years they vary. For example, the attainment of Year 6 pupils in 2012 and 2013 was below the national average. However, much higher proportions than usual of these year groups started the school in the older classes with achievement levels typically lower than expected. Pupils in the current Year 6 are working at least at the expected levels for their age. Some are doing better than this, and a few pupils are working at Level 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the current year, pupils in all classes are making good progress from their starting points. They are on track to reach nationally expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics and an increasing number are reaching the higher levels. However, there is more to do to ensure all of the most able pupils do as well as they possibly can.
- Pupils who join the school at other than the normal times, many of whom arrive in Key Stage 2, are made very welcome and helped to settle quickly. A considerable proportion of the new arrivals have additional learning needs, which sometimes arises from earlier disruption in their primary education. The school is very clearly focused on identifying pupils at risk of falling behind and any gaps in learning of the pupils who join the school at different times. Leaders' determination to ensure that all pupils make good progress clearly shows the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination.
- Because of good quality teaching and effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make at least good progress from their individual starting points.
- The attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, in reading, writing and mathematics was half a year behind that of other pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2013. However, these pupils made similar and sometimes better progress as other pupils in the school. The gaps are closing rapidly in all classes in the current year in all three subjects, because all pupils are making good progress.
- The higher than average proportion of pupils who are looked after by the local authority, who are also supported by the pupil premium, achieve well from their individual starting points on joining the school.
- A strong focus on reading exists in the school. Early reading skills are taught well and an above average proportion of pupils reached the national standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2013. Reading standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with nationally expected levels. Adults seize any opportunity to listen to pupils read. For example, pupils enjoy the time they have to read to an adult during the popular after-school film. Pupils of all ages speak enthusiastically about the books and authors they enjoy when reading in school and at home.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors and responded to Parent View and the school's most recent parental questionnaire all said that their children make good progress. The pupils who met inspectors, including some who joined the school at other than the usual times, also expressed very positive views about their learning and progress.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and some, particularly in Year 6, is outstanding. Senior leaders' clear focus on pupils' learning and regular training for teachers is continuing to improve the quality of

teaching. As a result, the majority of pupils achieve well.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are friendly and welcoming. They are excited and curious learners because good teaching provides a wide range of stimulating learning activities. During the inspection, children were eagerly writing invitations, designing and making presents and baking cakes for the class 'wedding' ceremony planned for the upcoming Valentine's Day.
- Pupils make the most progress in lessons when teachers use their strong subject knowledge and skilful questioning to discover how much pupils have understood. They quickly tackle any misunderstandings which arise and swiftly move learning on when pupils have grasped the concept being taught. As a result, little learning time is lost and pupils make at least good progress.
- Lessons are well planned and provide a range of activities which spark pupils' interests. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson, pupils were discovering how to separate sand, salt and water. They were fully involved in learning through a balance of practical activities and information provided through careful explanation by the teacher.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because the level of challenge in some lessons, particularly for the most able, is not high enough to move learning on quickly enough, and although progress is good, it could be even better.
- Recent improvements in teaching the basic mathematical skills are not always capitalised on by staff. This is because pupils do not always have sufficient opportunity to use the skills they have learned in other subjects.
- Teachers' mark work regularly, however, marking is better in some classes than in others. Pupils who benefit most from teachers' marking are given clear points for improvement and time to act on them.
- Homework is an integral part of teachers' planning and supports learning in class well. 'Learning anywhere' projects which are completed at home are popular and contribute well to pupils' learning.
- Relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils are excellent. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons. The older pupils, value the termly one-to-one interviews held with their teachers to celebrate how well they are doing and talk about their learning goals. However, not all teachers set individual targets for pupils and, as a result, pupils are not always clear about how they can improve their work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well supported in lessons, during break times and in out-of-hours learning so that all make good progress and learning well.

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

- Pupils are proud of their school. They are well mannered and keen to tell visitors about their work and the many opportunities they have to take part in out-of-school activities.
- Pupils look smart in their uniforms, take care of their belongings and keep their school tidy.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils listen attentively to teachers and teaching assistants and enjoy the regular opportunities provided for them to work together in small groups.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The different forms of bullying, including cyber and prejudice-based bullying, are well understood. Instances are rare and if issues do arise, pupils trust the adults to deal with these promptly.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to make a strong contribution to the life of the school. Members of the school council attend governing body meetings and older pupils run after-school clubs, such as the cheer-leading session taking place during the inspection.
- Playtime is a happy, active time in the school day. The school grounds have been imaginatively developed with the aim of encouraging pupils to participate in activities which promote a healthy lifestyle. Pupils don 'wellies' to stomp about in the mud and wetland areas which have been created. As a result of the well-planned playground, pupils of all ages play together happily.
- Pupils new to the school and those with additional learning, health, social and emotional needs

are included in everything on offer. The school provides sensitive and caring support, especially through the role of the community support worker, for pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable.

- Attendance has an extremely high profile and is consistently above the national average.

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

- A welcoming and inclusive atmosphere exists in the school. Governors, school leaders and staff share the headteacher's ambition for the school and ensure that pupils are treated equally, feel safe and enjoy school.
- Effective leadership and management, including the middle leaders, have sustained the school's good overall effectiveness since the time of the previous inspection. The challenges of high inward and outward mobility of pupils in Key Stage 2 and the increase in the number of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable have been tackled strongly and sensitively. The school has good capacity to continue to improve.
- Systems for checking on pupils' progress provide clear and regular information about how well everybody is doing, enabling staff to quickly identify and support gaps in the education of new pupils and those who may be at risk of underachieving.
- Checks on the quality of teaching are accurate and take place regularly. An effective training programme for staff is helping keep skills sharp and up to date. All this is helping teaching to continue to improve and increase the proportion that is outstanding.
- Leaders have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and what needs to be done to continue to improve. School plans focus on the correct priorities but timescales are too broad to enable leaders to check that improvements are taking place quickly enough.
- The curriculum has continued to develop since the previous inspection and contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is well enriched by a range of visits to places of interest. Subjects are brought together into topics that capture pupils' interests well.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy regular opportunities to participate in sport and physical education through lessons and a wide range of after-school activities. The school regularly takes part in competitive sports events with other schools. The primary school sports funding has been allocated effectively to provide specialist sports coaching.
- Parents, including those of children with special educational needs, are highly positive about the care their children receive. The parents' forum plays an active role in the school. For example, this group worked with leaders to produce the school's homework policy.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors know the school well and provide leaders with good levels of support and regular and increasingly robust challenge. The governing body is provided with detailed overviews of pupils' performance and the quality of teaching in the school. Performance management systems are robust and leaders and staff are set challenging targets linked to pupils' progress and school priorities. Governors are clear about the link between pupils' achievement and salary progression. Governors ensure that pupil premium funding and the primary school sports funding, which is provided to enable pupils to become more active and follow healthy lifestyles, are allocated appropriately. Safeguarding procedures meet current 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105662
<b>Local authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	440727

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sara Rutter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hazel Mackay
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 624 9577
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