

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Rackhouse Road, Northern Moor, Manchester, M23 0BW

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- This lively and successful school serves the needs of the local community exceptionally well. It celebrates and values the mix of pupils from a wide range of different cultures and backgrounds.
- Most pupils, including the most able, make good and sometimes outstanding progress in all classes, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teaching is usually good and increasingly outstanding. The excellent relationships pupils have with staff help them to be confident learners and to try their best.
- Pupils feel safe and are eager to learn. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and often outstanding.
- The headteacher shows great determination to go the extra mile in improving the school. This passion for improvement is shared by staff and governors. As a result, teaching is improving and standards are rising.
- Excellent relationships exist with parents who greatly value their involvement in the education of their children and the life of the school.
- Strong partnerships exist with other schools. These help to share good practice and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding. Sometimes pupils do not get on to harder work quickly enough.
- Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to improve their work.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to practise and improve their writing skills.
- Standards reached by the end of Year 6 are not yet high enough.
- Plans to improve the work of the school, especially the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, are not always clear in how they will be measured.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons or parts of lessons and checked closely on pupils' work in lessons, in books and on display around the school. Inspectors also talked with pupils about their work and listened to them read.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other teachers in school. Discussions were held with a representative from the local authority and school governors.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, including the school improvement plan, the school's checks on how well it is doing and pupils' progress data. Inspectors also checked documents relating to child protection, safeguarding, the attendance and behaviour of pupils and minutes of governing body meetings.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be considered, but inspectors took account of the school's own surveys of the views of parents. They spoke informally to some parents and other family members who were dropping their children off at school. They also took account of the views of staff through five voluntary questionnaires that were completed.

Inspection team

Chris Maloney, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Clarice Nelson-Rowe

Additional Inspector

Sheila O'Keeffe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- Although the majority of pupils are of White British heritage, a large number of pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds including Indian, African and Eastern European.
- Many more pupils than seen nationally are supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority, and children from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been significant changes in the membership of the governing body since the last inspection.
- The school works closely with the Wythenshawe cluster of Catholic schools and with St Brigid's Catholic Primary School in Beswick.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding and so raise standards to above average, particularly in writing by the end of Year 6, by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan tasks that stretch the abilities of all pupils so that they can move on quickly to harder work
 - ensuring that teachers always provide marking that helps pupils to know how to improve their work, and give them time to show that they have understood the advice given
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their writing skills.
- Improve leadership and management further, by ensuring that the plans produced by the school's leaders at all levels are more precisely measurable in how they will improve aspects of the school's work, particularly the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school because they are taught well and receive skilled extra help when they need it. They have many exciting opportunities to learn that keep them interested and motivated to work hard.
- Children usually start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below and sometimes well below those expected for their age, particularly in their reading and writing. Most children make good and often outstanding progress from their different starting points.
- Although there was a dip in standards in 2013, pupils usually leave Year 2 with standards that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics and at the higher levels. This reflects good progress from their starting points when they entered Year 1. In the 2013 Year 1 check on reading, pupils attained as well as others nationally. This shows that younger pupils are gaining a better grasp of the sounds that letters make (phonics).
- Pupils continue to progress well in Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6, they generally reach standards that are average in reading, writing and mathematics, although not enough of the most able pupils reached the higher Level 5 in reading and mathematics.
- Data on the progress of pupils in different classes, and work seen by inspectors, show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising in all classes. The school holds good information on the most able pupils and this shows that many more of them are now making the progress they should. They develop a real desire for knowledge, as evident in a Year 6 English lesson, when pupils eagerly explored the ways in which an author influences how a character is viewed by the reader.
- Improvements in reading standards are due to significant improvements in the teaching of reading and the good quality support pupils receive from highly-skilled teaching assistants.
- Pupils' love of reading is clear from the very positive views they have about reading and the eagerness with which they are counting the days until the recently improved school library re-opens.
- The school has been working diligently on improving pupils' writing and their ability to use grammar and punctuation accurately. Although writing is improving in English, pupils are given too few opportunities to use and extend their writing skills in other subjects. This is resulting in the improvements in pupils' progress in writing not being as strong as it is in reading and mathematics.
- In mathematics, pupils are doing well in basic number work, calculation and problem solving. Pupils show confidence in tackling new work and standards are rising throughout the school.
- Pupils enjoy using information and communication technology (ICT) resources to help them present and explain their work, such as Year 5 pupils' research on mountains.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive high quality, well-targeted additional support to ensure they make good progress and often make outstanding progress.
- In 2013, the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, was approximately one term ahead of similar pupils nationally. These pupils were about half a year behind other pupils in the school who are not supported by that funding in reading, writing and mathematics. School data and work seen by the inspectors confirmed that this gap in attainment is closing rapidly.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good and increasingly outstanding. Teachers go out of their way to ensure that they have an excellent knowledge of pupils as individuals and use this information to plan exciting and interesting work and provide support to them when needed. A typical comment from pupils was, 'Our teachers are always there for you when you need them.' Staff celebrate

pupils' successes in and out of school, such as in Morris dancing, karate or football. This boosts pupils' confidence and willingness to aim high.

- Highly-skilled teachers and teaching assistants provide good quality support for those pupils who need it, knowing exactly what to do to support them, especially in their reading.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and sometimes outstanding. Staff work well together helping children to settle quickly and learn confidently with increasing independence.
- When pupils' learning is good or better, teachers inspire pupils with interesting and demanding work that makes them think hard and deepens their understanding, and the most able pupils, in particular, are quickly provided with more challenging work. This was seen in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, for example, where pupils were gripped with enthusiasm as they worked on problems involving doubling and halving numbers. As soon as pupils were ready, they were moved on to much more demanding work that really stretched the thinking of the most able pupils in particular, reflecting the teacher's high expectations of their work.
- Teachers use their good and sometimes excellent subject knowledge well to question pupils in order to check on their progress and move them on quickly in their learning. However, occasionally, work is too easy and opportunities are missed to move pupils on quickly to harder work.
- Although the quality of marking is improving, teachers do not always make it crystal clear how pupils should improve their work or give them time to respond to the advice given.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Sometimes it is outstanding. They enjoy school, are keen to learn and eagerly await the start of lessons. This is reflected in their broadly average and improving attendance. A typical comment is, 'I look forward to school every day because I learn something new and the teachers are really helpful.'
- Pupils have excellent relationships with teachers and support staff who have high expectations of their behaviour and what they can achieve. This helps pupils to be respectful and try their best.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in prayer and to reflect on their actions and what they can do to help others. A good example of this is the school's 'Mini Vinnies Group', set up as a part of the St Vincent de Paul Society, who are raising money to help the homeless in Manchester through a 'Bad Hair Day'.
- Pupils enjoy the company of pupils from other cultures and faiths and work and play harmoniously together. Pupils understand the right of people to hold different beliefs. A typical comment was, 'No matter what culture or religion you are from, you have the right to speak about your beliefs.'
- Pupils very much enjoy the jobs they are given, such as a playground buddy or a member of the school council, who have, for example, worked to improve the range of playground equipment.
- Behaviour is at its best when teaching is also at its best. However, when teaching fails to meet the learning needs of pupils well enough, some pupils lose interest and begin chatting. This slows the progress pupils make.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and know a great deal about staying safe and healthy. Older pupils in particular knew about staying safe on the internet. A typical comment was, 'It's easy for someone to pretend they are different to who they really are.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. They say it does not happen in the school but are confident staff would sort it out fairly if it did.
- Parents' responses to the school's surveys and their conversations with inspectors all show that they are happy with the standard of behaviour and safety in the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's unwavering passion and strength of mind to make the school the best it can be has successfully inspired staff and governors to improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of all pupils.
- Teachers and support staff are well supported. They receive good quality training and opportunities to share and improve their practice through strong links that have been formed with other schools. Rigorous checks on the quality of teachers' classroom practice are made by senior staff to celebrate the things they do well and to provide detailed guidance on how to improve further. Staff welcome this very helpful approach and this is one of the reasons why staff morale is so high.
- The progress of pupils is checked on closely so that any who are doing well enough can be identified quickly and given the support they need to improve. The 'Peace Room' is a beautiful calm space where skilled staff provide the just the right type of support pupils need to help them cope with any worries or concerns that might be hindering their learning.
- Senior and middle leaders use their accurate understanding of how well the school is doing to plan priorities for improvement. However, although these are the right priorities, it is not always clear how these will be measured, especially the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.
- The range of subjects is planned creatively to offer stimulating opportunities to learn, such as celebrating the home cultures of different pupils, such as Polish Easter or India day. Other exciting events, such as the 'World of Work' day brought staff from Manchester Airport to the school to help pupils learn about becoming fire fighters, air traffic controllers and cabin crew.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. It has excellent links with orphanages and schools in India and Kenya to help pupils deepen their understanding of the lives of others and ways they can help them.
- Excellent links exist with parents and the community. Parents feel valued and supported. As one parent told inspectors, 'Mrs McGee, the headteacher, goes above and beyond the call of duty. She is there for you in sorrow and in joy.'
- Good use has been made of additional primary school sports funding to improve the quality of sports coaching and the range of sports for pupils to try, such as basketball.
- The school has received good support from the local authority in checking the accuracy of the school's judgements about how well it is doing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors visit regularly, know the school well and are determined to support school improvement. Governors are well trained and rigorously check the work of the school, particularly the quality of teaching and the progress of different groups of pupils. The extra funding is used well for the benefit of those pupils who are eligible and their progress is carefully tracked. Governors have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing in comparison with other schools and keep a careful eye on the school's finances.
 - Governors ensure that the progress of pupils is closely linked to teachers' salary awards and that safeguarding arrangements meet 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	105519
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	439518

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gerrard Connett
Headteacher	Margaret McGee
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2009
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