

St Marys' Roman Catholic Primary School, Bacup

Tong Lane, Bacup, Lancashire, OL13 9LJ

Inspection dates

11–12 March 2014

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

- Over time, leaders have not yet secured good progress in all year groups.
- Teaching is not always good. Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills across the school.
- Pupils are not involved enough in improving their work through responding fully to teachers' marking.
- The expectation of what pupils, especially the most able, can achieve in reading and mathematics is not always high enough.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their mathematical skills through real-life problems in other subjects.
- There are occasions when adults do not use accurate letter sounds when talking with pupils, particularly when they are teaching pupils how to read and write.
- Some subjects are not led and managed well enough by middle leaders.
- Not all governors are fully involved in holding the school to account for standards and the progress of different groups of pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Children have a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They settle in well and the staff's good focus on children's speaking and listening skills speeds up their progress.
- Standards in writing across the school are improving rapidly with many pupils achieving higher levels at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils are well supported through a wide range of individual and small group activities.
- Pupils' work displayed around the school provides a bright and inviting environment.
- The improved checks on pupils' progress are enabling the school to provide effective help for those at risk of falling behind in their work.
- Together, the executive and acting headteachers, along with deputy headteacher, have created a supportive, welcoming community where pupils behave well and feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed seven teachers and visited 15 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the executive headteacher and the acting headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the executive and acting headteachers, staff, pupils, parents, members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed break time and talked regularly with pupils as they moved around school.
- The inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- A range of the school's documentation was examined, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, documents relating to monitoring and evaluation, systems for tracking pupils' progress, documents regarding safeguarding, key policies and pupils' work in their books.
- Inspectors talked with some parents and took account of responses of the school's most recent questionnaire for parents. Not enough responses were received to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for these to be available for analysis.
- Inspectors analysed 11 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Sue Sharkey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Hilary Ward

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with 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 above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding 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.
- The school has an above average proportion of pupils who enter and leave the school part way through their primary education.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A part-time executive headteacher and part-time acting headteacher have been in post since January 2014 to cover the absence of the headteacher.
- Since the previous inspection, two supply teachers have been in post to cover two teachers on maternity leave.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good in order to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in all year groups by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve particularly the most able pupils in reading and mathematics.
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills in all subjects
 - planning a wider range of real-life problem-solving activities in subjects other than mathematics
 - making sure that pupils always have time to respond to marking comments in order to improve their work
 - develop the teaching of letters and sounds further so that adults always use accurate letter sounds.
- Strengthen leadership and management including governance further by:
 - taking even more action to accelerate the progress of pupils in each year group
 - improving children's access to quality outdoor learning in the Reception class
 - developing the role of subject leaders in all subjects, not just for English and mathematics, so that all leaders are able to check the learning of different groups of pupils in the subjects for which they are responsible.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 in some year groups, not enough pupils are making good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics, because teaching is not consistently good. Although standards over the last two years have risen, at the end of Year 6 standards in reading and mathematics are still below average.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes enjoy sharing a book and are able to focus on the pictures as they identify characters in the story. The teaching of phonics (matching letters to the sounds they make) is regular but adults do not always use accurate phonic sounds when helping pupils to read words. Older pupils continue to enjoy reading choosing books that interest them to read both at school and at home.
- Standards in reading in both key stages are improving. In the Year 1 national phonics screening check, standards were below average in 2012 but rose to average in 2013.
- By the end of Year 2, standards in writing are also improving. In a Year 2, pupils worked well in pairs as they explored and identified how the spelling of words ending in 'y' changed.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, standards in English and mathematics have improved over the last two years, especially in reading and writing. Standards reached in 2013 were still below average in mathematics and reading, but were significantly above average in writing. All pupils made the expected rate of progress in writing, but the proportion was below average in reading. In mathematics, most pupils made the progress expected of them.
- The number of pupils achieving the higher levels in both Key Stages 1 and 2 was below average except in writing at the end of Year 6, where pupils were significantly above the national average in 2013. The number of pupils making more than the progress expected of them in writing was more than double the national average. Not enough is expected of what pupils can achieve, particularly for the most able pupils, who are sometimes provided with work that is not always hard enough in lessons.
- The achievement and progress of pupils supported by the pupil premium and those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs generally across the school requires improvement. Nevertheless, in the 2013 Year 6 national tests, the standards reached by pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals were above average in reading and writing. In mathematics their standards were one term behind other pupils in the school.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding effectively to target pupils individually and as a group. Teaching assistants work closely with these pupils delivering a wide range of activities to support their needs and, as result, in mathematics the gap between the standards reached by these pupils and others in the school is closing rapidly. This shows the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those typical for their age, especially in speech and language and mathematics. They make a good start to their education because their learning is organised well. Children in the Nursery class experience good quality learning both indoors and outdoors. This is not the case for the Reception class children who have very limited outdoor space and so they are not able to access a wide range of activities. Even so, during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage children make good progress but their skills are still below average when they join Year 1.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching over time requires improvement because it has not enabled pupils in all year groups to make good progress. Improvements are beginning to have a greater impact across the school but some inconsistencies still remain.
- Although pupils' work is marked regularly, with helpful comments to assist pupils to improve their work, insufficient time is provided for pupils to respond to these comments.

- Pupils learn and practise their mathematical skills mostly during their regular mathematics lessons. However, there are lost opportunities to develop and use these skills in exploring real-life situations through problem-solving activities in other subjects.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have many opportunities to improve their speaking and listening skills, through learning to hold a conversation, sharing feelings and experiences or performing in front of others. As pupils progress through the school, there are fewer occasions to build on and develop these skills.
- Work is often matched closely to meet the different needs of pupils but there are occasions when the work planned for the most able pupils is not aspirational enough.
- Pupils were happy to show their English and mathematics books to inspectors. They are proud of their work, their writing is generally neat and work is well presented.
- There are good relationships between pupils and adults. Behaviour is managed effectively and through respect for each other, pupils are quick to respond to teachers' questions, answering carefully and sensibly.
- Pupils' work is celebrated not only around the school but also in classrooms, helping to ensure that there is a good climate for learning throughout the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say they enjoy school because teachers are fair and they like the different activities in lessons. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is good, although there are occasions during lessons when pupils are restless and try to distract others.
- Pupils feel well cared for at school and they think highly of the 'Place2Be' where they can talk about any problems that they might have or emotional difficulties they may be experiencing.
- Pupils say that there is now less bullying in the school than there used to be but there are still a few instances and some falling out due to name calling. Pupils have a good understanding of the different kinds of bullying.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe because they help each other and adults in school look after them and are always there for them.
- Attendance is average overall, but above average for many individual pupils. The school works closely with parents to encourage better attendance, with staff often contacting parents personally.
- Both the school council and the Eco team readily take on responsibilities or 'work' to improve the school. For example, the school council have recently requested new playground equipment to enhance playtimes and the Eco team are developing the pond and woodland area. Pupils' views are valued and the leaders regularly seek pupils' suggestions and ideas.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management of the school requires improvement because teaching has not been consistently good over time, therefore, not enough pupils between Years 1 and 6 have been making good progress. Although there is effective monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders, further action is still needed to ensure pupils make good progress in each year group.
- The subject leaders for English and mathematics are active in bringing about improvement in their areas of responsibility, but not all subject leaders monitor pupils' learning, so they do not have a clear enough view of the progress that different groups of pupils make in their subject.
- The school manages staff performance effectively and this is carefully linked to teachers' pay and training. Recent training provided for staff on writing has already helped pupils to improve their work.
- The executive headteacher and the acting headteacher work effectively with the deputy headteacher, senior teacher and staff to continue to improve the school. They have created a harmonious community where pupils and staff are happy to work together. Links have recently

been made with other primary schools where teachers are able to work with other teachers and observe high quality teaching. School leaders check the progress of pupils rigorously and meet regularly with teachers. All these actions help to demonstrate the capacity for further improvement.

- Staff are extremely committed to their work. The staff questionnaire reflects high morale and strong team spirit.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the school's performance and has been working closely with leaders providing a high level of support. It provides valuable staff training, as well as carrying out a range of activities with leaders to check on the performance of the school helping to ensure that the school continues to improve during the absence of the headteacher.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively through the curriculum. A wide range of activities are enjoyed by pupils. For example, circus skills, re-enacting a day as a Victorian, street dance classes and visits out of the local area to extend pupils' horizons. No pupil is prevented from having the opportunity to enjoy the full range of learning opportunities that the school provides.
- The school uses the primary school sports funding to ensure that pupils have access to after-school clubs, as well as having additional swimming time so that all pupils throughout the school have an opportunity to learn to swim. As a result, many more pupils are enjoying swimming, have greater confidence in the water and are able to take part in competitions.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is supportive and brings a range of expertise to its role with some governors visiting the school informally. Governors are aware of how the school compares with other schools within the local authority, but not all are fully aware of how the school compares with others nationally. They gather information on how the school is improving the quality of teaching so that they can make decisions about linking pay to teachers' performance. The governing body checks the school budget and is involved in making decisions about how to allocate funding, such as the pupil premium and the primary school sports funding. Governors undertake regular training to ensure that they meet all their responsibilities, including those relating to safeguarding.

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	119662
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	434098

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	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diana Doherty
Headteacher	Mike Richards
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2013
Telephone number	01706 873123
Fax number	01706 872421
Email address	head@st-marys-bacup.lancs.sch.uk

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