

# Poplar Street Primary School

Ravenwood Drive, Audenshaw, Manchester, M34 5EF

## Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

<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		Requires improvement	3
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' achievement has declined since the last inspection. In 2013, standards were well below average, because Year 6 pupils did not make enough progress from their starting points.
- Pupils make slower progress in mathematics, because a few teachers have weak subject knowledge and the mathematics curriculum is too narrow.
- Progress falters for some pupils because of weaknesses in their handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills.
- Teaching has been too variable over time. In the past, weaker teaching in Years 3 and 4 meant pupils had too much ground to cover by the end of Year 6.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils. They accept work which is not the best pupils can do for their age or ability.
- Teachers' marking does not always provide enough advice and guidance to help pupils improve.
- Senior leaders, including the governing body, have not been relentless enough in their drive to secure improvement, lift the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement.
- The governing body is too reliant on the information provided by the headteacher. Governors do not ask enough searching questions about teachers' pay grades and how this relates to pupils' achievement over time.

### The school has the following strengths

- A love of learning is fostered well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children flourish in this area of the school and make good progress over time.
- Pupils enjoy school. They feel safe and know they are well cared for by adults. The school is harmonious and cohesive.
- Attendance rates are improving and are above the national average.
- The headteacher has taken decisive and timely action to halt the decline. The tide is turning quickly. Pupils are making swifter progress and achievement across the school is much stronger than it was at the end of the 2013 academic year.
- The teaching of music and physical education make a good contribution to pupils' cultural, moral, spiritual and social development.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 19 lessons taught by 14 teachers. Two of these lessons were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at playtime and lunchtime. They met formally with four groups of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders and managers, members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding, information about pupils' attainment and progress and pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a small group of parents at the start of the school day. They also took account of the 58 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to inform the inspection.
- Inspectors evaluated the responses from 31 staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Joanne Olsson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sheila O'Keeffe

Additional Inspector

Mary Lanovy-Taylor

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school. The number of pupils on roll has increased by 20% since the last inspection.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than found nationally, but is increasing over time.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding is above the national average. Pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free schools meals, those who are looked after by the local authority or who are children of families in the services.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is average. A larger than average proportion of pupils is supported through school action. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or supported at school action plus is below average.
- The number of pupils who join or leave the school throughout the school year is broadly average, but this is becoming more common over time.
- The school does not meet the government's floor standards (these are the minimum standards and rate of progress expected of primary pupils).
- There is a children's centre on the school site. This is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection. The latest report is available on the Ofsted website at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

- Improve teaching so it is consistently good on a daily basis by:
  - raising all teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve for their age and ability
  - ensuring that teachers' marking picks up common errors and provides pupils with precise advice and guidance to help them improve
  - tackling weaknesses in teachers' mathematical subject knowledge
  - ensuring that teachers are relentless in demanding high standards of presentation which reflect pupils' pride in their work.
- Raise pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics so that more make better than expected progress from their various starting points by:
  - tackling weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting skills
  - providing greater opportunities for pupils, particularly boys, to write at length and with flair to capture the interest of the reader
  - reviewing the whole-school teaching plan for mathematics to ensure that it promotes progression in skills and knowledge and is adapted when pupils encounter difficulties.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - reviewing the roles and responsibilities of subject and middle leaders so that they all make a positive contribution to improving teaching and pupils' learning
  - tightening up the systems for checking on the quality of teaching over time so that greater account is taken of the work in pupils' books

- sharpening the targets set for holding teachers to account to ensure these demand more and reflect salary scales across the school.

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

- Pupils' achievement has slid since the previous inspection, falling from broadly average to well below the national picture in 2013. Year 6 pupils left school almost two terms behind in their learning because some pupils did not make enough progress from their different starting points. Nonetheless, the tide is turning quickly and the achievement of all pupils is much stronger than it was this time last year. Evidence from lesson observations, pupils' books and school data show the decline has been halted. Almost all pupils are making expected progress from their different starting points and an increasing number are working at the levels expected for their age.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge which are typically lower than expected for their age. They get off to a good start and enjoy their learning; they are curious, imaginative and willing to concentrate for long periods of time. Pupils make typical and sometimes better progress, across Years 1 and 2, although standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are below average. Pupils joining and leaving the school throughout the year make a difference to the school's results; over one tenth of the pupils in Year 2 had been in school less than a year.
- In the past, progress has been too slow in Years 3 and 4. As a result, too much time is spent trying to make up for lost ground in Years 5 and 6. Despite many pupils making good gains in their learning over these two years, the distance to travel is just too great.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is strongest. Pupils read competently because they have the skills to tackle unfamiliar words and to understand the text. Pupils make slower, but improving, progress in mathematics. Pupils' progress in writing is sometimes hampered by weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and handwriting skills. Not all pupils have the stamina or flair to write at length.
- The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding used to lag behind that of their classmates by over a year. This is no longer the case. This group generally makes better progress from their various starting points and attains as well as their peers do in reading and mathematics. They are behind in writing by one term. Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs make expected progress. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language do well compared to their classmates. Most able pupils, particularly in Year 6, are gaining ground because of expert guidance and focused teaching.
- There are still some differences in performance between boys and girls, although the gaps between these two groups are narrowing over time. Girls typically do less well than boys in mathematics, because they often lack confidence. Boys fare less well in writing; some boys are not keen to put pen to paper.
- Pupils are willing workers because they like their teachers. Not all, however, are excited by their learning. The quantity, quality and presentation of pupils' work sometimes falls short, because not all adults demand that pupils do their very best.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Pupils' experience of teaching over time has been too variable as they move through the school. Strong teaching in some year groups, particularly the Early Years Foundation Stage, is not always built on securely in other classes. Recent changes and improved systems for holding teachers to account are successfully tackling pupils' uneven journey, so teachers in Years 5 and 6 have less of an impossible task in plugging gaps in learning.
- Teaching is improving. More attention is given to pupils' starting points, so teachers know where to pitch activities and tasks are shaped to help pupils reach the levels expected for their age. Mentoring sessions in Key Stage 2, coupled with teaching pupils in ability groups, are effective. As a result, girls are gaining in confidence in mathematics and boys are becoming more inclined

to write.

- Mathematics teaching is better, but is not strong enough in a few classes, because teachers do not have secure subject knowledge. The whole-school plan for mathematics is not flexible enough to adapt to pupils' needs. This means new concepts are sometimes introduced when it is clear pupils have not got to grips with the previous topic.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of pupils; they accept poor presentation and limited amounts of work as the best that pupils can do.
- Some teaching is becoming increasingly effective at pointing out the precise steps pupils need to take to improve their work. This is not always the case. Teachers mark pupils' work diligently, but fail to correct common mistakes or pick up recurring errors.
- Pupils are full of praise for their teachers. They say teachers make learning fun and are always on hand to help them, if they struggle with their learning. Classrooms are warm, friendly and nurturing. As a result, pupils feel secure, they are happy to share their ideas and they willingly work in pairs or small groups to solve problems. This makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### requires improvement

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. As one pupil commented: 'This is a safe school. We are like a family; we stick together and never leave anyone out.' This view is shared by parents. They agree unanimously that pupils are safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe because they are encouraged to make the right choices and assess risk. Pupils talk with confidence about the strategies they use to keep themselves safe when using the internet and the actions they would take if they were uncomfortable with unwanted physical attention from adults.
- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. It is not good because pupils are not always motivated to do their best. Some pupils do not show enough pride in their work and, occasionally, there is some low-level chatter when teaching fails to ignite pupils' interest.
- Pupils' otherwise positive behaviour contributes to a calm and harmonious school. Pupils listen attentively, follow instructions and set to work without any major disruptions getting in the way of their learning. Pupils are polite to adults and to each other. The behaviour of Year 6 pupils during a drama lesson led by a teacher not normally employed by the school did not falter once. This is testament to the level of respect pupils show all the adults they encounter during their time at school.
- Pupils say behaviour is generally good. They point to some name-calling from time to time but they have confidence in adults to tackle any issues they raise. They have a good understanding of bullying. They understand why homophobic name-calling is wrong, but admit they sometimes hear homophobic language on the playground. Pupils say bullying incidents have reduced over time; they are in no doubt the school acts swiftly if any pupil is subject to harassment. Most parents agree that pupils behave well. A very small minority believes bullying is not dealt with effectively.
- Pupils enjoy school. This is reflected in their increasing attendance rates, which are above average for all groups.

### The leadership and management

### requires improvement

- The headteacher willingly accepts that he 'took his eye off the ball' and the checks on teaching lacked rigour during the time he was out of school working with the local authority. His honest and accurate appraisal of the school's effectiveness has led to decisive action which is bearing fruit; pupils' achievement is improving quickly; gaps between groups are narrowing and teaching is getting better on a day-to-day basis. The headteacher has the backing of staff and governors. The whole-school aim to foster pupils' 'participation, productivity and progress' has become the

watchword for all staff and governors; it is cementing a common sense of purpose and a shared determination to tackle weaknesses. As a result, the school has adequate capacity to secure further improvement.

- The impact of other leaders in driving improvement is variable. Some are seizing the mantle firmly. Other leaders are not following suit, because their roles are not clearly defined.
- Lessons are observed frequently. Teachers benefit from skilful feedback which leaves them in no doubt about what they need to do to improve. Support plans are in place for teachers whose teaching is not yet good, with clear actions to bring about improvement quickly. Nonetheless, pupils' books are not scrutinised often enough to help leaders gain an accurate view of teaching in all classes day in and day out.
- Professional development is carefully planned to tackle whole-school weaknesses and the support available from other schools is harnessed well. For example, links with a local outstanding school are raising teachers' expectations and the strong partnership with other schools in the locality is helping to develop the role of middle leaders.
- Good systems are in place to check teachers' performance and reward strong teaching. Nevertheless, the targets for teachers do not always demand enough, particularly of those teachers who are at the highest points of the salary scale.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Subjects are linked into topics to make pupils' learning more interesting, to help them gain a sense of their own history and to prepare them to live in a diverse society. There are ample opportunities for pupils to develop their musical skills through frequent lessons, instrument tuition and singing assemblies in which pupils enthusiastically take part.
- Additional sport funding provided by the government is used very effectively to refresh teachers' skills and increase the range of physical education activities. This is making a positive difference to pupils' well-being, raising girls' confidence and increasing the participation of younger pupils in physical activity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, enabling pupils to gain confidence, build their self-esteem and nurture their talents over time.
- Achievement gaps are closing and there are few incidents of harassment in this safe and caring school. This positive improvement means the school's provision for tackling discrimination and promoting equality is adequate.
- The local authority has not provided enough support and challenge to the school over time. It did not intervene quickly enough, when the first signs of the school's decline became apparent.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a realistic understanding of the school's effectiveness because the headteacher provides good quality information on pupils' achievement. Governors use published national data well. Nonetheless, they did not step in quickly enough when the first signs of a decline in achievement became evident.
  - Governors have a good grasp of the difference pupil premium and sport funding are making to closing achievement gaps and raising participation rates in physical education. Governors check that the performance of teachers is managed according to school policy. However, they do not ask enough questions about teachers' pay rewards or link this information to pupils' achievement.

## 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>	106204
<b>Local authority</b>	Tameside
<b>Inspection number</b>	431993

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	405
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Neil Wagstaff
<b>Headteacher</b>	Iain Linsdell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 May 2011
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