

# St Alphonsus RC Primary School

Hamilton Street, Old Trafford, Manchester, M16 7PT

**Inspection dates** 8–9 April 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- From exceptionally low starting points on entering the Early Years Foundation Stage pupils make outstanding progress by the end of Year 6.
- Standards in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 6 were well above the national averages in 2013, and writing was above average.
- Teachers generate a great enthusiasm for learning among pupils. They expect the very best of pupils although they do not record the steps pupils achieve in their writing precisely enough.
- Pupils' behaviour is invariably exemplary. Attitudes to learning are extremely positive and relationships are excellent.
- Pupils feel entirely safe in school and demonstrate this in the positive way that they contribute to its everyday life.
- The management of teaching and learning by senior leaders is highly effective and is a major contribution to pupils' excellent achievement.
- The headteacher's outstanding leadership over time has continued the drive for improvement since the previous inspection and taken it from good to outstanding.
- The governing body provides first-class support and challenge for the school and plays a crucial part in helping it to achieve its ambitions.
- Parents' comments show that they are extremely happy with the care that the school provides and the progress that their children make.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons and part lessons.
- Discussion took place with pupils, members of staff, a representative from the local authority, parents and members of the governing body.
- There were insufficient responses via the online questionnaire, Parent View, to gain a reliable summary, but a recent internal survey of parents' views gathered by the school was analysed.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a wide range of documentation that included: national assessment data and the school's own assessments; minutes from governing body meetings; the school's own view of its work; local authority reports; samples of pupils' work and safeguarding documents.

## Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Steve Rigby

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Many of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A significant proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language and some, who join the school at different stages throughout the year, are at an early stage of acquiring English.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A broadly average proportion of pupils are supported through school action.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the current floor standard for schools, which is the government's minimum expectation for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

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

- Raise standards in writing to match those achieved in reading and mathematics by recording more precisely when pupils reach a target in writing so that teachers have a more accurate view of their progress and a stronger basis for planning the next steps in their learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- When children start in the Nursery their abilities in language and communication skills and their personal, social and emotional development are exceptionally low when compared with typical expectations for their age.
- Language development is a key focus throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, along with the development of children's confidence and good learning habits. Support for children whose English is at an early stage of development is outstanding, as is teaching generally. As a result, children get off to an excellent start and a significant proportion, currently, are on track to reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year.
- This rapid rate of progress continues in Years 1 and 2. Pupils reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are in line with national averages at the end of Year 2 and this represents excellent progress from pupils' earlier starting points.
- Pupils whose early delay in language development meant that they did not reach the expected standard in understanding and using phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) in Year 1, make rapid progress to catch up by the end of Year 2.
- Progress from Years 3 to 6 is outstanding, largely because of the consistency of outstanding teaching. Many pupils in Year 5, for example, are already tackling mathematics at the level expected of Year 6 pupils. The numbers of pupils throughout the key stage currently on track to make good and outstanding progress are high.
- There has been a rising trend in standards at the end of Year 6 over the past four years. They were well above average in 2013 with excellent performances in reading and mathematics. Writing was not as strong, but slightly above average nonetheless. Currently, pupils' work and school assessments in Year 6 show standards are on track to be at least average at the end of the year. Given that one third of the group were not on the school roll at the end of Key Stage 1 and some non English-speaking pupils have joined during the current year, their progress is remarkable.
- The school recognises, nevertheless, that although there is excellent quality writing to be seen, especially from most able pupils, overall standards in writing do not match those achieved in reading and mathematics.
- Reading is a particular strength in the school and pupils achieve most highly in that area. Pupils read regularly at home and at school and really enjoy books. Year 2 pupils clearly show their good knowledge of phonics when tackling unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 6, pupils read fluently with good understanding of what they read. They are confident readers, willing to read aloud, for example, in lessons and who see the importance of reading for both learning and pleasure.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, including those at an early stage of acquiring English, make rapid progress because of the first class help they receive. They very quickly gain the confidence they need to speak and tackle reading and writing. A pupil who started the school six months ago unable to speak English, for example, could name all of the letters in the alphabet, talk confidently about the world map that showed his home country, Poland, and use the phonics skills he has mastered to read the words, New Zealand, from the map.
- Other groups of pupils considered to be potentially vulnerable achieve equally well. A parent who spoke to inspectors could not praise the school highly enough for the way it provides for pupils with special educational needs. Their learning is tailored precisely to their particular needs and the additional individual help they receive boosts their confidence and learning very effectively.
- Teachers expect the best of the most able pupils in the school and this means that they make excellent progress from their starting points. The great majority achieve higher than expected levels at the end of Year 6. They are very well provided for through carefully planned challenging work.

- Progress of those supported by the pupil premium is similar to others in the school. Particular attention is given to their progress to make sure that the additional funding is having a positive effect by contributing to pupils' equality of opportunity. Assessments and pupils' work show that there is little difference in attainment at the end of Year 6. Indeed in the 2013 national tests in writing, those known to be eligible for free school meals did better than others in the school.

## **The quality of teaching**

**is outstanding**

- A major strength of teaching in the school lies in teachers' understanding of pupils' needs and how they learn best. The quality of planning for different groups of pupils and their varying abilities makes sure that all make their best possible progress.
- The work of teaching assistants is a crucial part of the school's success because of their sensitivity to pupils' needs and their skilful management of the work they do alongside teachers.
- Learning resources, including new technology are used extremely well in lessons. Year 1 pupils, for instance, used a camera and a tablet very confidently to photograph different kinds of plants in the school grounds. This really brought their science learning to life, especially when their pictures were enlarged on the electronic whiteboard.
- There is typically a great deal of enthusiasm for learning. Pupils take on new challenges eagerly. They help each other out and test their ideas on each other in order to solve problems. Pupils describe their lessons as 'epic' and, in fact, give their whole school '10 out of 10'.
- Pupils make rapid progress in speaking and this underpins their excellent progress in reading and contributes well to their writing. High priority is also given to essential spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils write successfully in different styles and for different purposes but some of their writing still lacks the range of word choices that would raise the quality even more.
- Very high expectations are also a hallmark of mathematics teaching. Current planning already includes some of the increased challenges of the new primary curriculum for September 2014. This resulted, for example, in Year 5 pupils confidently using algebra to solve number problems. Pupils are given a firm grasp of multiplication tables and how different number systems work. They have many opportunities to solve mathematical problems in different subjects both inside and outside the classroom.
- Teachers ask pupils really searching questions both to assess their understanding and encourage them to speak about topics. Adults continually check pupils' progress during the course of lessons.
- Marking in literacy and mathematics books is usually challenging and helpful to pupils, but teachers do not record precisely when pupils reach the targets, particularly in writing, that have been set for them. As a consequence, pupils' actual progress is sometimes unclear and the basis for planning next steps for pupils is not as secure as it might be.

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

**are outstanding**

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are very eager to learn and they are keenly aware of how their behaviour in lessons can have a very strong influence on their achievement.
- At other times, for example in the dining room or during assemblies, their behaviour is invariably a credit to them.
- Pupils make an enormous contribution to the 'family' ethos of the school. Their politeness and good manners, friendliness towards one another and their respect for the strong Christian values the school teaches make sure that there is always a warm welcome for everyone.
- The school council works hard to make sure that the pupil voice is heard and the impact can be seen in the many playground developments.  
Pupils are more than willing to take on other roles such as playground buddies or helping others

to read.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils are exceptionally clear about dangerous situations they may face and how to deal with them. A pupil from Year 2, for example, gave a very clear overview of the dangers linked to cyber-bullying.
- Pupils do not tolerate bullying or offensive name-calling. They say that it rarely happens because they respect one another. Inspection evidence supports this entirely. Older pupils take very good care of the younger ones.
- Attendance has improved rapidly. It is currently in line with the national average and strengthening because of the school's work with parents. The vast majority of parents are unreservedly positive about the school.

## **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The school's outstanding leadership is driven by the mindset that something can always be better. To that end the headteacher has nurtured and coached a senior leadership team who fully share her commitment to improvement and work alongside with equal effectiveness. The vision, to sustain the best that can be provided for pupils, is shared by all staff and governors and recognised by parents who speak highly of the school.
- Middle leaders, responsible for managing subjects, are driven by the same commitment to engage pupils in an imaginative and enjoyable curriculum that enables them to achieve their best across the range of subjects. Pupils do well in the arts, sports and science, for example, as well as in English and mathematics. The curriculum is greatly enriched by an extensive list of after-school clubs and topic-linked visits to enhance both pupils' learning and their physical well-being.
- The physical education curriculum is boosted very well by the effective use of sports funding and thoughtful planning by the subject leader. An outcome already seen was the highly impressive performance of street dancing by Year 6 pupils. Ongoing training for teachers is improving their subject knowledge and skills as well as the teaching quality.
- There is an unflinching focus on teaching quality in the school. Senior leaders follow a full timetable of lesson observations and are quick to provide support and further professional training for staff. The effectiveness of their management is seen in the sustained high quality of teaching over time. All teachers know how they are accountable for standards and progress in the school and how salary progression is linked to their performance in the classroom.
- The local authority fully recognises leaders' strong ability to continue to drive improvements and provides only 'light-touch' support.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors know how well their school performs and are highly ambitious for its continued success. They analyse national assessment data skilfully to compare the school's progress with that of others and they challenge any potential areas of weakness. They speak confidently about the performance of different groups and are very positive about their effective use of pupil premium funding to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunity to achieve as well as they can. Governors are fully aware of teaching quality, how it is managed and how teachers' performance is linked to increases in salary. Other aspects of financial management, including the primary school's sports funding, are carried out efficiently. Safeguarding procedures meet all 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>	106360
<b>Local authority</b>	Trafford
<b>Inspection number</b>	439536

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	225
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sara Rocca
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tina Birds
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 April 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 872 5239
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