

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Sabden

Watt Street, Sabden, Clitheroe, BB7 9ED

Inspection dates 14–15 May 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.

- Pupils in all key stages make good progress from their different starting points and do especially well in writing. They usually reach standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle in very quickly and make good progress in their first year in the school.
- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding.
- The school has robust systems for the early identification of pupils experiencing learning difficulties and very well-planned support ensures that these pupils learn well.
- Pupils are well cared for and treated as individuals. They care for each other and behave very well so they thrive and make good progress. They feel safe in school.
- The headteacher is an enthusiastic, dedicated leader who has high ambitions for the school. She leads well by example and is held in high esteem by parents, staff and the whole community.
- The school's leaders judge performance accurately and take effective action to bring about school improvement.
- The school provides a rich curriculum that provides extremely well for the different abilities and interests of its pupils.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Consequently, attendance is very good and much higher than the national average.
- Governance of the school is strong. Governors are well informed, active in the life of the school and provide challenge and support for its work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching does not yet result in pupils making outstanding progress. Marking is not always consistent and work does not always match the abilities of different groups of pupils.
- Pupils do not always present their work to the best of their ability.
- The opportunities for learning in the outdoor area of the Early Years Foundation Stage are limited.
- Not all members of the teaching staff contribute enough to checking and judging the standards that pupils reach.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons or parts of lessons delivered by five teachers, which included a short visit to a lesson given by a sports specialist and two assemblies. He also listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, a group of parents, a local authority representative and a group of pupils. The inspector also talked with pupils in classrooms and on the playground.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documents including: the school's own information about pupils' progress; planning to support pupils' learning; the school's own review of how well it is doing, and the school improvement plan; the monitoring of learning and teachers' performance; the organisation of the curriculum; safeguarding information and the minutes of governing body meetings. The inspector also looked at the school's new website.
- The inspector also took account of 10 responses to the on-line survey (Parent View), 27 responses to the school's own parental questionnaire and 12 responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Peter Martin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a very small primary school and numbers of pupils in each year group are very small.
- All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is the additional funding provided by the government for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who are admitted at times other than into the Reception class is well above that seen nationally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding so that more pupils make even faster progress by:
 - ensuring that marking always makes clear to pupils how they can improve their work and give them opportunities to respond to these comments
 - ensuring that work closely matches the abilities of pupils, particularly the most able, to enable them to reach the highest standards
 - setting high expectations of how pupils should present their work and insisting on them always meeting those expectations
 - developing provision in, and use of, the outdoor area of the Early Year Foundation Stage to provide more opportunities for children to develop skills and knowledge in all the areas of learning.
- Strengthen further the leadership and management by providing opportunities for all the teaching staff to take responsibility for checking standards in different subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The number of pupils in each year group is very small and, therefore, data related to pupils' attainment need to be treated with caution when comparing with national figures. The 2013 Year 6 group comprised six pupils of whom only two started in the school in the Reception class.
- The number of pupils who join the school at times other than the Reception class, particularly in Years 5 and 6, is much higher than seen nationally. Given the size of the year groups, this is particularly significant and the comparison of progress between key stages is difficult. However, school data show that, in general, pupils make good progress in all key stages from their different starting points.
- Children make consistently good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children start school in the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age. They settle in quickly and become confident learners. The large majority of them enter Key Stage 1 with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development is above the national average.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1, and standards at the end of Year 2 were well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013.
- The teaching of phonics (the linking of letters to their sounds) is a particular strength. The majority of children leave the Reception class with a high level of phonics knowledge.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the standard set by the government for the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has been well above the national average for the past two years. Pupils usually make good progress in Key Stage 2, but standards at the end of Year 6 in 2013 in mathematics were not typical for the school. This was because outcomes of a very few pupils skewed the results in mathematics.
- In 2013, standards in reading were broadly in line with the national average, while standards in writing were above the national average. The progress made by pupils in writing was well above that seen nationally.
- By the end of Year 6, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are usually above the national average and the proportion of pupils making at least the progress expected of them or exceeding this is usually in line with the national average.
- The school has placed additional emphasis on the teaching of reading and mathematics this year and introduced new teaching methods. As a result, the school's own assessment data show that pupils in all year groups are making at least good progress and that the majority of pupils in all year groups are making rapid progress in all subjects.
- There were no pupils supported by the pupil premium funding in Years 2 or 6 in 2013. However, numbers of these pupils are rising and the school tracks their progress carefully. The additional funding is used very effectively to provide additional support where needed and to ensure that these eligible pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, are able to access all the advantages of educational provision the school offers. School data show that these pupils are making at least good progress and, in some cases, outstanding progress throughout the school.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is one of the many strengths of the school. Parents told the inspector that they had moved their children into the school because of the school's excellent reputation for supporting such children. They said that their children had settled very quickly and begun to thrive. School data show that all these pupils are making good progress from their different starting points and significant numbers are making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- The headteacher focuses relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching. Rigorous procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress are in place. As a consequence, teaching is improving and is now consistently good and sometimes outstanding.
- Pupils are constantly praised for their contributions and good effort. This encourages them to be confident learners. Consequently, they are eager to learn and not afraid to make mistakes because they know they can learn from them.
- Pupils in all year groups work very well together. In literacy in Years 5 and 6, pupils worked in pairs on writing a piece of dialogue between two characters from the play *Macbeth* to be acted out for their classmates later in the lesson. They listened to each other, negotiated and agreed the dialogue in a very mature fashion.
- Staff have good subject knowledge. Pupils' understanding is checked through skilful questioning and this also develops their ideas further. However, on occasions, pupils' understanding is not assessed early enough in the lesson, which prevents pupils who are ready to move onto harder work from doing so sooner. This sometimes leads to some restlessness as the pupils are eager to get on with the task and the pace of their learning is slowed.
- Pupils have individual learning targets in English and mathematics. They know what levels they are working at and what they need to achieve to get to the next level. Pupils know clearly what it is they are going to learn in lessons and the steps they must take to succeed.
- Work in pupils' books shows that teaching over time is consistently good. Pupils' work is marked regularly and comments tell pupils what they have achieved. Sometimes, pupils assess how well they or their classmates have done for themselves. This deepens their understanding of what they are learning and the progress they are making.
- The marking of pupils' work tells pupils clearly what they need to do to improve and they are given the opportunity to respond to this advice. However, not all marking is of a similarly high quality and is not effective enough in helping pupils to learn from previous work and move forward.
- Interesting activities are planned in all subjects to capture the interest of pupils. Educational visits and visitors are used well to capture pupils' imaginations and involve them in interesting activities. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons because they are fun and that they can always ask teachers to help them when they are stuck. This love of learning was clear in a science lesson in upper Key Stage 2, where pupils were eagerly planning an investigation to find out what made the best parachutes.
- While work is often challenging, it is not always matched closely enough to the different abilities and ages of the pupils. At times, different groups of pupils can find some of the work too hard or too easy.
- Expectations of how pupils present their work are not always high enough and, as a consequence, pupils do not always do it to the best of their ability.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage share a classroom with Key Stage 1 pupils. The class is very well organised. Teaching assistants are deployed very skilfully to ensure that all age groups are engaged in work appropriate to their age and ability.
- Teaching assistants are generally deployed well throughout the school and display a high level of skill. They provide well-targeted support for individuals or groups of pupils and this helps them to make good progress.
- When children join the Reception class, they settle in very quickly. The teaching of phonics and writing is a particular strength. Some Year 1 pupils were very keen to show the inspector their writing which involved long sentences and good vocabulary.
- However, the outdoor area for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not provide enough opportunities for them to explore all the areas of learning because it has to be shared with all the older pupils. Consequently, children have fewer opportunities to decide for themselves where to learn and develop new skills in all areas of learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is consistently good. They behave well in lessons, play together happily on the playground and eat nicely together in the dining hall.
- In class, they listen to their teachers carefully and follow instructions. This allows lessons to run smoothly and for good learning to take place. Only on occasions when the work is less challenging or when pupils are not allowed to get on with their work quickly enough, do they become less attentive and a little restless.
- The warm, caring atmosphere is a strong feature of the school. Pupils and parents describe the schools as being a big family.
- Pupils genuinely care for each other. Older ones play happily alongside their younger schoolmates and show a high level of care for them. As a typical example of this caring nature, a parent related the story of how, at the end of a school church service, she saw an older child help a younger child who was having difficulty putting on a coat, without having to be asked.
- Pupils are friendly, well mannered and polite. They are proud of their school and feel very safe and well cared for by all the adults in the school and by each other.
- Pupils also have a good understanding of bullying and its different forms, including cyber-bullying. They are adamant that there is no bullying in the school. This is a view shared by parents and staff. Pupils are very confident that the staff will always deal with even a minor falling-out quickly.
- The school has good systems to help pupils to behave well. Parents, staff and pupils all agree that behaviour in the school is good. One parent described it as being 'exceptional at times'. The school's behaviour log confirms that incidents are very rare.
- Attendance is consistently well above the national average. Parents say that attendance is good because 'the children love coming to school'. This helps the school fulfil its commitment to equal opportunities for all its pupils by ensuring that they attend school as much as possible, do not miss their learning, and make as much progress as possible.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils are very aware of how to keep themselves safe and healthy including, for example, the dangers of the internet. The school councillors are currently re-writing their own school rules for 'eSafety'.
- The school site is clean, safe and secure. Systems for safeguarding and child protection are robust and leaders and the governing body ensure that all statutory duties are met.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides the school with a strong sense of direction. She has a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses based upon rigorous and accurate checks. She is dedicated, passionate and has high ambitions for the school. She sets high expectations for staff, pupils and herself.
- The school staff are highly positive about the leadership and share responsibilities around the small team of four staff. They feel well supported in their professional development and are fully committed to the drive for continued improvement in teaching and learning.
- End of key stage data and the school's own internal assessment information about pupils' progress are used to accurately judge performance and to set new priorities for further improvement. Actions to bring about improvement are set out in the concise and effective school improvement plan. This has clear criteria linked to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, which enables the school and governors to check on the completion and impact of the actions taken.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are very happy with the school and speak of the school leadership in very positive terms.

- Pupils are assessed regularly and their individual progress tracked carefully. Termly meetings review how well pupils are doing and identify at an early stage where pupils may be falling behind. Lesson planning is then modified and, where necessary, additional support is provided to enable the pupils to catch up. As a consequence, the large majority of pupils are making good progress.
- Robust systems for checking the performance of teachers and the quality of teaching, with clear links to any increases in salary, are in place. However, although actions have resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching, it is still not outstanding.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress in English and mathematics is also robust but it is less so in other subjects. Members of staff, other than the headteacher, do not yet play a significant enough part in checks on pupils' achievement.
- The curriculum is rich and broad with many opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents in music, art and sport. The additional primary school sport funding is used very effectively to enhance the sports provision in the school and to encourage the involvement of pupils who would not normally participate in sport. For such a small school, it offers an impressive range of additional sports' opportunities.
- Relationships are a genuine strength of the school. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is at the heart of the school's work. There is excellent work to develop pupils' understanding and respect for other faiths and beliefs. The school has excellent links with parents, the parish and the local community.
- The local authority regards this as a good school and provides light touch support only. However, the school's leaders have accessed training provided by the local authority which has helped them to make improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has much improved since the last inspection. Governors are highly committed to the school and play a very active role. For example, governors linked to subjects closely check the progress made on key priorities and produce detailed reports for discussion at full governing body meetings. Procedures for checking on pupils' progress and school data, the quality of teaching and safeguarding are rigorous. Governors also check the use of additional funding provided for pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium and for the school's provision for sport. They do this very carefully and check on how effective this has been in bringing about improvements in pupils' achievement. They constantly seek additional training to enable them to carry out their role well. Governors are very supportive of all the work of the school, while at the same time holding it to account for its actions.

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	119651
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	443924

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Firth
Headteacher	Claire Halstead
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2011
Telephone number	01282 771 009
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	cc@st-marys-sabden.lancs.sch.uk

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