

St Gabriel's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

Vicarage Road South, Castleton, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL11 2TN

Inspection dates 13–14 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few pupils in Key Stage 2 make better than expected progress, particularly in mathematics, and so their achievement requires improvement.
- Teachers do not always build quickly enough on what pupils already know to provide the challenge they need to make more rapid progress, over time or in lessons.
- In mathematics in Key Stage 2, pupils' skills in aspects other than basic computation are not strong.
- Teachers do not refocus or adjust their teaching and activities well enough in lessons to ensure learning moves on at a good rate.
- The quality of teachers' marking does not consistently provide pupils with information about how to improve their work or opportunities to correct and learn from their mistakes.

The school has the following strengths

- There is some good teaching.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the links between letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is taught well.
- The curriculum is exciting. It captures pupils' imaginations and provides a range of activities that contribute positively to pupils' enjoyment of school and their spiritual, moral and social development.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their above average attendance.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They enjoy taking on responsibilities.
- Leaders and governors have been uncompromising in tackling the dip in standards in Key Stage 2 to bring about necessary improvements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read from Year 2 and Year 6.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority and seven governors including, the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors took account of the 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered the views expressed in the 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Discussions were held with parents who brought their children to school at the start of the school day and others who picked them up at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and scrutinised the work in pupils' books, the school's own data on pupils' current progress, the school's improvement plans, planning and monitoring information and minutes of governing body meetings. Records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also considered.

Inspection team

Anthony Kingston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Helm

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Gabriel's RC Primary is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- In recent years, the school has experienced many changes in staffing.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to at least good, in order to raise pupils' achievement, by:
 - always using assessment information to plan lessons so that pupils of all abilities are consistently challenged, especially in mathematics
 - regularly checking learning in lessons and reshaping activities so that pupils are continuously challenged and can move on to the next steps in learning more quickly
 - ensuring that teachers' marking and feedback informs pupils how they can improve their work and that time is given for them to respond to teachers' comments.
- Raise Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment and further accelerate their progress in mathematics by:
 - broadening the mathematics curriculum to ensure that the balance between development of basic computational skills and all other strands of the mathematics National Curriculum is better matched
 - ensuring that pupils become more skilled in aspects of mathematics other than basic computation, but especially problem solving.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement varies across the school. Those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 tend to make the best progress. Until recently, the progress of pupils in Key Stage 2 has been more erratic. Thanks to improvements in Key Stage 2, progress is now more consistent and rapid. These improvements are not yet, however, sufficiently well established to close gaps in learning so that overall achievement is good.
- Children join the Reception class with skills and understanding below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress so that by the time children enter Year 1 their attainment is closer to those expected. Recent improvements in the quality of teaching mean that children are making even better progress this year, with more children on track to achieve a good level of development in 2014.
- Over time, standards at the end of Year 2 have been average. In 2013, standards improved to well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics.
- In 2012 and 2013, standards at the end of Year 6 dipped from being average to below average in reading and especially mathematics. Standards in writing remained average. This dip in attainment has been tackled successfully, resulting in more rapid rates of progress and rising standards. Consequently, current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain expected standards in reading and writing but slightly below those expected in mathematics.
- It is evident from information gathered by observing learning in lessons, talking with staff and pupils, analysing school data and reviewing pupils' work that an increasing number of pupils in all year groups, including those who are the most able, are now making more rapid progress. Any gaps in attainment between groups are closing rapidly, although standards in mathematics are still slightly below those of reading and writing.
- Reading is a priority throughout the school. The early reading skills are taught increasingly well to link letters with the sounds they make (phonics) to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words, phrases and sentences. The school's information indicates a much larger proportion of pupils on track to reach the expected standard in the check of pupils' early reading skills at the end of Year 1, than in 2013. As pupils move through the school, they develop a love of reading. This was exemplified by one pupil who said, 'As I get further into a book it starts to come alive and become a part of me.'
- Pupils enjoy writing. By the end of Year 6, it is often vibrant and vivid helped by the emphasis that is given to reading, which boosts their vocabulary, and to explaining ideas in lessons. Pupils select vocabulary with care to take the reader into a setting or to portray emotions. Excellent examples of these are the Haikus written by pupils as part of their studies on the First World War.
- In mathematics, standards throughout the school are now improving rapidly. However, pupils' progress, especially the most able, is slower in this subject because they do not always move on quickly enough to challenging work and practise a wide enough range of skills.
- The school promotes and checks that all pupils have equal opportunities. As a result, all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress similar to that of their classmates. The school has tackled the dip in standards in Key Stage 2 over the past two years forcefully and with a sense of urgency. As a result, progress has accelerated and the evidence shows that overall standards are likely to be in line with the current national average by the end of Year 6.
- The progress of the most able pupils is similar to that of their peers. However, not enough reach the higher Level 5 in mathematics. This is because they are not always set work that allows them to deepen their knowledge and extend their skills.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional teaching assistants and nurturing activities. The attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, in English and mathematics in Year 6 in 2013 was the equivalent of six terms behind that of other pupils in the school. They were four terms behind their national

counterparts. The gap in standards was due to the composition of this group of pupils and the small but significant proportion of pupils with low standards of attainment who joined the school more recently than others.

- Information about this group of pupils' current progress indicates that the attainment gap is narrowing and these pupils are catching up with their classmates.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over the past two years, there has been a period of considerable difficulties and changes in staffing. This resulted in high levels of variability in the quality of teaching across the school. With the support of the local authority and governors, the headteacher has implemented many actions to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching which, while not yet good, is improving rapidly.
- The variability in the quality of teaching in different year groups has affected learning and progress for pupils as they move through the school, especially in Key Stage 2. Through strong action taken by the senior leadership team and the introduction of an intense and focused programme of training, leaders have acted firmly and successfully to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school. Their efforts have not yet had a full impact on raising its quality to good overall and ensuring that Key Stage 2 pupils attain and progress well.
- A particularly strong aspect of all teaching is the respect that adults show towards each other and pupils. This develops pupils' understanding of the need to respect the views and contributions of others. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils are confident learners prepared to try hard and unafraid of making mistakes because they know that they will learn from them. This approach to teaching has resulted in developing a good climate in which pupils can learn and feel safe.
- In some lessons, work is well matched to the needs and abilities of pupils and challenging questions probe pupils' thinking. This was particularly impressive where pupils had to work back from a given answer to explain how it was reached. Pupils were enthusiastic and keen to learn, willingly sharing ideas.
- Over time, not all teachers challenge pupils well enough to help them make the best possible progress. This is because the information teachers have of what pupils know, understand and can do has not always been used well enough when planning lessons or activities, especially in Key Stage 2, in mathematics and for the most able.
- In mathematics, although they are taught basic skills well, pupils do not have the expected skills for their age to apply these to other aspects of mathematics, such as space and shape, measuring, data handling or problem solving. This particularly applies to the most able pupils and consequently, the proportion of pupils who reach the higher Level 5 is well below average.
- Some teachers check learning to identify pupils' errors. They use this information to reshape activities and provide further challenge to move learning on. However, this practice is not used well enough to identify pupils of all abilities and move them on more rapidly to further challenging work. This limits their progress. Hence, too few pupils, especially the most able, make better than expected progress.
- Marking and feedback across the school are regular and positive. The most effective marking informs pupils of what they have done well, what they need to do to further improve and encourages pupils to correct their errors and respond to teachers' comments. This practice is, however, not seen in every classroom. Consequently, some pupils are not always clear about how to improve and continue to make the same errors.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well, are polite and welcoming and enjoy talking to visitors about their work.

- Relationships in the school are very good and inspectors saw a number of acts of kindness between pupils during the inspection.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, listen carefully to their teachers and respond quickly to instructions. They are keen to do well and the vast majority are fully involved during lessons. Pupils consider behaviour to be good. This was exemplified by one pupil who said, 'We all care for one another because we are taught to think about what we say and do.' The very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View agree that behaviour is good.
- Pupils appreciate all that adults do for them and willingly take on responsibilities. They particularly enjoy acting as ambassadors for the school when showing visitors around the school.
- They take great pride in representing their fellow pupils on the school council or acting as one of the house captains. They recognise that to carry out these roles responsibly they need to be good role models. The efforts of all pupils make a significant contribution to a learning community in which everyone is valued.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in some lessons where activities do not interest pupils fully, a few become fidgety and lose concentration.
- The importance of attending school regularly is given a high priority and robust systems are in place to support pupils' attendance. As a result, pupils attend school regularly and are punctual to lessons. Pupils wear their school uniform with pride and look very smart.
- Attendance is consistently above average showing how much pupils enjoy coming to school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils' strong sense of security and belonging is reflected in the confident way pupils enter the school at the start of the day, including the youngest children.
- Pupils know to whom they would go if they had any concerns or worries, saying that their teachers always listen to them. They report that if there are any incidents, they are dealt with quickly and effectively by the school staff.
- Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and its different forms. They assert that bullying very rarely occurs because everyone is a friend to everyone else. This view was reflected by the vast majority of the 53 parents who responded to Parent View in 2013. However, of the 17 parents who responded to Parent View at the time of this inspection, a slightly higher proportion than previously expressed concerns about the way that the school deals with bullying, citing that the recent and sometimes repeated changes in staffing as the cause for this. Inspectors did not find evidence to substantiate these views.
- Through the curriculum, assemblies and visitors to the school, pupils learn how to keep themselves and others safe in a range of situations. The pupils talked in detail about road safety, cycling proficiency and how to keep themselves safe on the internet.

The leadership and management are good

- Following a period of significant change in staffing, which has significantly hampered the rate of improvement and contributed considerably to a dip in standards in Key Stage 2, the headteacher has successfully developed a whole-school team who, along with governors and staff, continuously strives for further improvement.
- As a priority, the headteacher has developed the skills of leaders in the school. These leaders now have a clear overview of the areas for which they are responsible and are making regular checks on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making.
- Leaders know the school well. Their rigorous checks on teaching and learning give staff clear guidance on how to improve. Teachers' performance is managed well. All teachers and teaching assistants have targets linked to priorities for school improvement and the progress pupils make. There are secure links between performance and pay awards for all teachers in permanent posts. Governors are firm and exacting in the application of the performance management process.
- The system for tracking pupils' progress is now used effectively by the recently appointed assessment coordinator. Individuals, groups and classes of pupils are now tracked carefully and

pupils who are at risk of falling behind are identified quickly so that they can be given prompt support. As a result, standards are improving. However, not all class teachers use this data or their day-to-day assessments well enough to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging for pupils of all abilities, especially the most able.

- The school has a good relationship with the local authority, which has recently supported it with developing the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority provided helpful guidance during the time at which the school was experiencing a high level of changes in staff.
- A detailed plan has been implemented to ensure that good use is made of the primary school sports funding and to ensure that the benefits remain once the funding is no longer in place. For example, specialist sports coaches are being used to provide professional development for staff so that the good quality of sports lessons continues.
- The curriculum captures pupils' imaginations and makes a positive contribution to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Reading and especially writing are well threaded successfully throughout the curriculum, but opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to a range of aspects of mathematics, especially problem solving, are not so evident or as well structured.
- The large majority of the parents are supportive of the school and would recommend it to other parents. However, their overall view of the school has dipped since the survey carried out in 2013. Most parents held in discussions stated that the disruptions in staff were the cause of their concerns. The headteacher and governors are aware of and understand parents' concerns. They have worked hard to resolve the staffing issue satisfactorily.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a clear knowledge of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to keep improving. It provides effective support and challenge, for example, following the dip in standards in 2012/2013 they held a series of meetings with the leadership team and the local authority to bring closure to the frequent changes in teaching staff. It also supported the headteacher in introducing a range of checks on teaching and the introduction of a nationally recognised programme to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school.
 - The governing body is very clear on the key priorities for improving the school and how these can be met. Governors have a good understanding of the school, including the quality of teaching, the progress made by different groups of pupils and teachers' performance and how they affect any increases in salary. Governors check spending carefully and are aware of how the school is using the pupil premium to improve eligible pupils' achievement. They make sure they are kept up to date with training to improve their effectiveness, especially when holding the headteacher to account and ensuring the school meets safeguarding 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	105825
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	444059

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	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Chadwick
Headteacher	Claire Ahern
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2010
Telephone number	01706 650280
Fax number	01706 356991
Email address	office@stgabrielsrc.rochdale.sch.uk

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