

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Buckingham Road, Cadishead, Manchester, M44 5HG

Inspection dates 17–18 June 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

- Over time, inconsistent teaching has resulted in pupils making uneven progress during Key Stage 2 so there is too much ground to catch up when they are in Year 6.
- Some pupils' achievement in writing is limited by comparatively weak skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers do not always check that pupils are attending to improving these errors. Comparatively little pupils' writing is displayed around school as a celebration and prompt for learning.
- Too many pupils do not have a range of interesting vocabulary to draw on in their speech or writing. Teachers do not always give sufficient opportunity for them to explain their ideas in depth using expressive words.
- Not enough pupils make high levels of progress from their relative starting points in reading in Key Stage 2.
- Subject leadership in humanities and science is not as well developed as in other areas.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are taking decisive action to improve teaching and raise standards.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is of good quality. Children learn well in response to skilful teaching in a stimulating environment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, including through a programme of memorable visits and visitors.
- Governors are well-informed and committed to the school's improvement. They challenge and support the headteacher in a measured way, including regarding the management of teachers' performance.
- Pupils are very loyal to the school, feel safe, behave well and enjoy learning.
- The school works effectively with families and external agencies to support vulnerable pupils.
- Staff morale is high. Committed teachers and support staff work hard and a 'can do' spirit pervades the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons, including one observed jointly with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. They made several short visits to other lessons and observed the work of staff working with small groups of pupils. They listened to groups of pupils reading and reviewed the work in their books over time.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, four governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils and attended a meeting of the school council. They reviewed responses to the school's survey of pupils' views as well as considering 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Fourteen responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account along with results of the school's own surveys of parents' opinions.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and examined a number of documents. These included the school's records of achievement of pupils currently in the school, records of the school's monitoring of teaching, policies and records relating to safeguarding and appraisal arrangements for teachers. The school's views of how well it is doing were considered along with minutes of meetings and reports from the local authority on the quality of the school's work.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of these services.

Inspection team

Shirley Gornall, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Elaine White

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It includes a Nursery that provides full-day sessions for up to 30 children.
- Several classes contain significantly more boys than girls.
- Around two-fifths of pupils are supported through the pupil premium. This figure is higher than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average, as is the proportion speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well-above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above that usually found.
- More pupils join or leave the school at the usual times than is the case nationally.
- The cohort that took the end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2013 was smaller than usual for the school. In 2013 the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has a number of awards including Investors in People and Arts Mark Gold. It is also a Dyslexia Friendly School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and thereby accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - creating further opportunities for pupils to provide extended spoken explanations of their ideas, in different subjects, using more varied vocabulary
 - consistently helping pupils to develop confidence in spelling, punctuation and sentence structure, including by responding to advice that teachers provide through their marking
 - developing pupils' reading stamina and their awareness of how to read unfamiliar words
 - ensuring that school displays celebrate pupils' extended written work and identify the features that underpin its quality.
- Develop teachers' skills as foundation subject leaders and also in science in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the new curriculum.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is uneven across junior classes. Pupils' progress over time has been too variable in Key Stage 2, leading to too many pupils entering Year 6 with gaps in their learning. There was a significant dip in achievement for pupils who left the school in 2013. This picture is improving now as staff are working in more concerted ways to boost pupils' skills and understanding.
- Children make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage from starting points that are below, and sometimes well below, those expected for their age, particularly in language and communication. Their social development is strongly promoted and their early reading and number skills are fostered through carefully-planned activities.
- Achievement in Key Stage 1 has strengthened over recent years and is good. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2 has risen so that more pupils are entering Key Stage 2 with secure skills. Pupils' progress in writing in Key Stage 1 is a strength, as shown by their interesting discussion about noun phrases that was then translated into written sentences.
- In 2013, pupils eligible for pupil premium were two terms behind their peers when they left Year 6. This gap was untypically wide for the school. The gap in attainment between these groups for pupils currently in school is closing.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. Most are making strong progress in response to skilful teaching and effective intervention. The deputy headteacher has particular expertise in identifying pupils' needs and arranging appropriate support for them to be met.
- Boys achieve less well than girls, particularly in reading. The school's leaders have recognised this disparity and are taking steps to address it through the provision of books that will stimulate boys' enthusiasm for literature and through competitive approaches such as 'reader of the week'.
- Pupils are generally able to break down unfamiliar words using their knowledge of the relationships between letters and the sounds they make (phonics) but they are less confident in deducing the possible meanings of words from their context. Some pupils spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about their reading habits and discussed their favourite authors knowledgeably, whereas others do not read regularly outside school and have less experience of books to inform their thinking.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics requires improvement as too few pupils exceed the progress expected of them. The picture is improving though and they enjoy investigations that provide opportunities for them to think about issues in real contexts. Pupils in Year 2 relished using their understanding of capacity when making milk shakes and older pupils could relate some of their learning about geometry to the construction trade.
- Some pupils' achievement is hampered by restricted choices of vocabulary that limits their spoken and written communication. Attainment in spelling, punctuation and grammar was low for pupils taking the national test in 2013. There are signs of improvement for pupils currently in school but pupils' work over time indicates the persistence of basic errors.
- Higher-attaining pupils are encouraged effectively in Key Stage 1 and more are now reaching Level 3 than has previously been the case. The achievement of higher-attaining pupils requires improvement in Key Stage 2 through more consistent challenge in lessons and through teachers' marking. Some pupils are being 'stretched', including through attendance at additional mathematics courses at a partner primary school, to boost their progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, inconsistencies in teaching have led to uneven and sometimes halting progress for pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2. This has resulted in much time in Year 6 being devoted to catching up and plugging gaps in pupils' understanding.
- Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to make good progress in all

areas of learning. Early reading skills are taught effectively and most children gain a secure understanding of the relationship between letters and the sounds they represent. Effective use is made of inspiring outdoor areas, including a garden where children love learning about the natural world.

- Teaching in Key Stage 1 builds effectively on pupils' early learning. This was shown by pupils demonstrating high levels of concentration finding out about analogue and digital clocks that characterised their growing ability to make links and comparisons.
- Changes in staffing during the year and a clear, open review of strengths and weaknesses in teaching have led to greater consistency in identifying pupils' needs and in planning to meet them. Inspection evidence confirms that the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is improving. Pupils' books indicate that their progress has accelerated over recent months. Teachers try different approaches, including making imaginative use of new technology, in order to engage pupils and deepen their learning. For example Year 6 pupils thought carefully about phrases to describe a woodland picture before transmitting their writing electronically to a screen to share with classmates.
- Teachers' marking has improved, with greater attention being paid to providing clear feedback to pupils on the next steps to be taken to improve their work. However, pupils do not routinely check that they have followed their teachers' advice and consequently errors persist, particularly in basic spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. Some pupils are unclear how to assess their own' and their peers' work.
- The teaching of mathematics has been reviewed and more opportunities found for pupils to apply their learning in interesting contexts. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 were engrossed by their investigation of parallel and perpendicular flags representing World Cup nations. Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to explain their thinking in detail using appropriate vocabulary and so it is not always clear how deeply concepts have been understood.
- Classrooms are bright and inviting, and pupils' art work is prominently displayed on corridors. However, in Key Stage 2, there is comparatively little written work displayed, particularly of boys' extended writing and this limits opportunities for them to learn from good and outstanding models. The school has focused on developing pupils' writing stamina but a tangible sense of writing being promoted and valued is not communicated through the environment.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Those who were observed leading activities for small groups of pupils showed skill in recognising small steps in their learning and adjusting work accordingly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are very proud of being members of St Mary's school where they feel valued as individuals. As one explained, 'All the staff want to help us do well on a lifelong journey.'
- Behaviour is typically good in lessons and around the school grounds. Classes establish their own names, identities and rules. Members of the 'fantastic foxes', for example, explained how turn-taking and care for each other are important.
- Pupils' attendance is improving and is now above the national average. A very small number of pupils are late for school or persistently absent despite teachers' best efforts to encourage punctuality.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to play their part during lessons, particularly when they are given stimulating activities to undertake. They cooperate well in groups and ensure that quieter children are encouraged to join in during lessons and on the playground. At the school council meeting, members considered how improvements could be made to the outdoor environment to encourage friendships further.
- The school's extra-curricular activities are well-supported. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their dance performance in front of a large theatre audience, stating how 'excited and proud' they felt as a result.

- Pupils are confident that the school handles any issues of bullying quickly and effectively, but are keen to point out that occasional name-calling is 'just normal falling out' rather than anything more hurtful. Equality is promoted strongly in school and no form of discrimination is tolerated.
- The school's work to ensure its pupils are safe and secure is good.
- Staff receive regular training on safeguarding and child protection and rigorous employment checks are in place. Pupils are given clear advice on how to keep themselves safe online and are aware at age-appropriate levels of the potential dangers of social networking.
- Pupils value the rewards system and thrive on praise and recognition. They enjoy responsibility, for instance in deciding how they will help at the summer fair.
- Exclusion from school is a very rare last resort. The school does not accept poor behaviour but works assiduously with those pupils who sometimes have social or emotional difficulties, including through initiatives such as anger management coaching.
- Most parents think that behaviour is well-managed and that their children are safe and happy at school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have taken decisive action to reverse the decline in standards that was evident in 2013. They communicate a strong, shared vision that only the best is good enough. They have secured the support of staff, established a culture where morale is high and developed the skills of teaching and support staff to accelerate pupils' learning.
- The school's self-evaluation is based on wide-ranging evidence. Leaders are acutely aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have developed a route plan to restore St Mary's status as a good school as quickly as possible. Plans include peer-working to share and embed good practice, both within school and in partnership with a local school.
- Leaders' monitoring of all aspects of the school's work has been strengthened. Their observations of teachers' work are clearly focused and underpin helpful dialogue as to the steps to be taken to secure improvement. Good-quality professional development opportunities have been provided for teachers and teaching assistants, the outcomes of which are evident in improved practice.
- Senior leaders within the school 'wear many hats' including taking responsibility for leadership of several subjects. Raising standards in English and mathematics has been an urgent and appropriate recent focus. The leadership of other subjects, including history and geography, has not been developed, partly due to transition in staffing. Planning for a new curriculum is underway and the school recognises the need to secure subject leadership so that teachers can be supported in designing relevant and engaging learning.
- Pupil premium funding is spent appropriately to enable pupils to receive additional support. Well-targeted intervention is leading to a reduction in the attainment gap between those supported by this funding and their peers. The sports premium funding supports a well-managed programme that is widening pupils' access to different forms of activity from dance to water-sports.
- The effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on and contribute to their community within and beyond school. For instance, older pupils thought sensitively about the ethics of Fairtrade footballs. Annual events such as the world food market and grandparents' day are remembered and valued by pupils and teachers. Projects to celebrate art and music involve skilled visitors.
- Leaders work in effective partnership with families and external agencies to support pupils, including those who have special educational needs or who are vulnerable. They show impressive tenacity in helping to remove barriers to learning for individuals.
- The local authority has provided good, proportionate support and challenge to the school. Leaders found the review of the school's work undertaken by the school improvement officer following disappointing performance in 2013 especially valuable. The officer provides informative, objective reports to the governing body that help them to hold leaders to account.

The authority has also provided access to a programme of support to improve teaching and has enabled the school to develop its use of intervention packages to meet the needs of pupils in upper Key Stage 2.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors bring a range of skills and experience to their roles along with a shared deep commitment to the school and the community it serves. They are fully aware that achievement dipped in 2013 and ask probing questions to satisfy themselves that good progress across school is being restored. Governors visit school regularly and know how effectively staff work. They take decisions rationally regarding the payment to staff and have withheld pay increases where appropriate when performance is not good enough. They contribute to the school's ethos and ensure that statutory duties are met, including in relation to safeguarding and financial management, the spending of pupil premium funding, and its impact on the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

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	105936
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	439835

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Tomkins
Headteacher	Gill Evans
Date of previous school inspection	20 July 2010
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