

St Clare's RC Primary School

Victoria Avenue, Blackley, Manchester, M9 0RR

Inspection dates

18–19 June 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| | 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.

- Teaching is good. Teachers plan a range of activities which interest pupils and encourage them to work together. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons and over time.
- By the end of Year 6, attainment in mathematics, reading and writing is broadly average. This represents good achievement from pupils' starting points.
- Well-tailored support for pupils with special educational needs and also those supported by the pupil premium enables these pupils also to make good progress.
- Good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables them to thrive in a very supportive learning community.
- Behaviour is good and attendance is broadly average and improving. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and good relationships with each other and with adults in the school. They particularly enjoy their topic work, physical education (PE) and art. They feel safe in school.
- The school's own evaluation of its work is accurate and based upon the regular and rigorous analysis of pupils' progress. The headteacher, strongly supported by the leadership team and governors, provides clear direction. Leaders, including governors, have acted decisively to improve the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. As a result, there have been significant improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in pupils' achievement across the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Assessment information, especially that gained through marking, is not always used effectively to plan pupils' progress, especially that of the most able. Work is not always precisely enough matched to pupils' needs and capabilities so that they can reach their full potential.
- Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to real-life situations or, in other lessons, to explore ideas for themselves.
- Pupils are not always given good guidance about how to improve their work, particularly their handwriting and spelling. They are not always given the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments in order to improve their work, particularly the accuracy of their writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons and made short visits to other activities led by teachers and trained assistants. Five of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher.
- Two groups of pupils met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior leaders. Meetings were conducted with the Chair of the Governing Body and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and phone calls from parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work with members of the senior leadership team and read a range of documents. These included documents about the school's strategies to enable leaders to gain an accurate view of its performance, school-improvement plans, pupils' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

Melvyn Hemmings

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Clare's is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is higher than that usually found.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school has a number of awards including Healthy School status. A breakfast club, run by the governing body, is available each morning.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in staff; several new teachers, including some senior leaders have joined the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' levels of attainment and increase their rate of progress further, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
 - improving the accuracy of pupils' writing, in particular their spelling and the presentation of their work
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in real-life situations
 - ensuring that the mathematics curriculum allows pupils to develop their skills in a cohesive way.
- Move teaching from good to outstanding across the school by:
 - ensuring information gained from marking and other forms of assessment feeds directly into lesson planning so that all pupils are given the right amount of support and challenge
 - making sure that marking always provides pupils with the specific guidance they need to improve their work, especially their writing, and that pupils are given the time to respond
 - giving pupils more opportunities to take the initiative and explore their own ideas.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The proportion of pupils making and exceeding expected progress from their starting points compares favourably with national figures. Many children enter the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge well below those typical for their age. They make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their speaking, listening and personal development and in mathematics. As a result, many enter Year 1 with skills that are close to those typical for their age and are confident learners, well prepared for the Key Stage 1 curriculum.
- Overall, pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. By the end of Year 6, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average.
- Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards have improved since the previous inspection and the rate of pupils' progress has increased so that the proportion of making more than expected progress has also increased.
- The most able pupils usually make good progress from their starting points in mathematics, in reading and in writing, with some reaching the highest levels by the end of Year 6. However, there is scope to provide even more challenge for these pupils to increase their independence and confidence as learners through problem solving and collaborative work.
- Pupils write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences and use a good range of vocabulary and structures. However, inaccuracies in spelling and poor presentation sometimes mar their work.
- Progress in reading is good. Pupils are taught phonics (letters and the sounds they make) effectively and are able to apply their knowledge in reading and writing.
- Achievement in writing and mathematics has improved recently, with most pupils now making more than expected progress in these subjects.
- Pupils of all ages, even the youngest, are enthusiastic about their reading. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read a variety of texts with a good level of fluency and understanding. Most are able to talk in detail about what they have read, and can talk about books they have enjoyed.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers as a result of the extra help they are given, according to need, both in class and in small groups.
- The extra support, such as extra help in the classroom and support from teaching assistants, that the school provides with the additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium enables these pupils to reach their targets and to make the same good progress as their peers. Gaps between the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in English and mathematics and their classmates have closed. They are no longer behind other pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good across the school, and there are examples of outstanding practice.
- Whole class, group and paired activities effectively increase pupils' confidence and their speaking skills. For instance, pupils regularly work in pairs to 'trade' information and learn from each other in this way.
- The imaginative use of video clips and other resources engage pupils' interest and deepen their knowledge and understanding. For example, in Reception and Nursery, activities such as acting out the *Bear Hunt* story or solving a puzzle based on number are designed not only to interest children but to effectively extend their learning. Year 2 pupils made swift progress with their reading because activities were very well matched to their needs and because demonstrations were very easily understood. However, this is not always the case. On occasions, pupils find tasks too easy or too difficult because work is not always precisely matched to their capabilities.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together. They ask pupils very searching

questions to get them thinking and to see how much they have understood or to challenge them to solve problems for themselves. For example, Year 4 pupils made good progress explaining what a resistor in a circuit was and went on to plan their own investigation about the effects they might have on the brightness of a bulb, as a result of practical activities they had carried out themselves. However, in some lessons, opportunities are missed to enable pupils to work things out for themselves in this way.

- Pupils' work is usually marked regularly and there are instances of outstanding practice within the school. However, marking does not always give pupils the precise guidance they need to improve, particularly in their writing. Marking in subjects other than English does not always pick up errors in spelling, so pupils continue to make the same mistakes. Some pupils respond to teachers' comments and improve upon the work they have done but this is not always the case.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils' moral and social development is particularly strong when pupils work collaboratively and learn from each other.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's work to keep both pupils and staff safe is also good. Pupils are courteous and considerate to each other and work and play very well together. Pupils support each other well, for example, when working with a partner. They take responsibility very seriously and are proud of their contribution to the school, for example as school councillors and as 'buddies' for younger children.
- Disruption to lessons is rare and pupils work responsibly and with enthusiasm. They listen carefully to others and respect each other's views.
- The school's work to ensure its pupils are safe and secure is good.
- Pupils have very good relationships with adults, feel safe and are confident that any poor behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively. They are aware of the different forms of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber-bullying that can take place and know how to deal with it.
- Children joining the Early Years Foundation Stage settle down well to routines, learn to take turns and play together well. They respond with great enthusiasm to the exciting range of activities planned for them to help them learn both inside and in the outdoor area.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They are enthusiastic about the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, that are provided and which have a positive impact on their health and well-being.
- Pupils enjoy school and are particularly enthusiastic about their art and music.
- Attendance is broadly average. It has improved over the last three years and persistent absence has decreased, as a result of the good work the school is doing in encouraging attendance and talking to those families whose children do not attend regularly enough.
- Pupils who may have challenging behaviour are supported effectively to make good choices and, as a result, incidences of poor behaviour are very rare.

The leadership and management are good

- The members of the leadership team have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and what could be improved further, based on a rigorous analysis of pupil progress. They have acted decisively to eliminate any underachievement and to improve the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. As a result, standards have risen and pupils now make good progress as they move through the school.
- There are detailed action plans focused on raising attainment and on improving teaching and learning. The school is well placed to improve further.

- Teaching and learning are closely monitored by senior leaders and teachers new to the school are effectively supported. Teachers work effectively in year group teams and with subject leaders to plan lessons and this is successful in ensuring a high level of consistency across classes.
- Subject leaders are involved in lesson observations and in driving improvement by working closely with class teachers in lesson planning. They are also involved in checking the school's performance, planning for improvement and in holding teachers to account.
- The senior leadership team has a detailed analysis of pupils' progress and this is used effectively to trigger appropriate interventions for pupils but it does not always feed directly into lesson planning.
- A comprehensive system of appraisal and performance management has been adopted, and in which there is a strong link to pupils' progress and financial reward and which is used to identify training for teachers.
- Safeguarding meets government requirements and discrimination in all its forms is rejected.
- The school works very effectively with local agencies and the local network of schools and with parents to ensure that all pupils settle well to learning. This includes detailed information for parents through the school website and newsletters so that they can help their children with their learning at home. The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively and all pupils do well.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of the pupils well. Pupils themselves have had a say in the topics and themes they study and are therefore enthusiastic about their learning. Pupils have frequent opportunities to practise their basic skills in their topic work as well as to develop their skills as scientists and historians. However, in mathematics the sequencing of the work pupils do does not always enable them to apply what they have learned to real-life situations or to deepen their understanding. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in music, art, Spanish and sport. The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of activities and visits which promote pupils' physical well-being and their personal development.
- The new primary sports funding is being used effectively to provide coaching for sports activities and to improve the skills of class teachers. This is not only promoting pupils' physical development and well-being effectively but also ensuring continuing good practice in physical education.
- Since the previous inspection, the local authority has provided effective support for the school such as help with improving provision and outcomes in literacy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas which need to be improved. Governors check the school's performance, including data that shows pupils' attainment and progress and have supported the school well through a period of considerable change. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and the performance of staff including how good performance is rewarded and any underperformance is tackled. The efficiency of spending is scrutinised, the effectiveness of the use of primary sports funding and of pupil premium funding, for example. Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are met. They are actively involved in the life of the school and now hold leaders to account effectively.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 105554 |
| Local authority | Manchester |
| Inspection number | 432132 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 455 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Bill Ryan |
| Headteacher | Vincent Jones |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17 April 2013 |
| Telephone number | 0161 740 4993 |
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