

St Oswald's Roman Catholic Primary School

Hartley Avenue, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 0NN

Inspection dates 10–11 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- St Oswald's is exceptionally good at meeting the needs of all pupils who attend. As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well from very low starting points. By the end of Year 6, attainment is above that expected nationally.
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is very strongly supported by staff and governors in a relentless drive for improvement.
- Teaching is outstanding and is constantly adjusted to meet the changing learning needs of pupils. Excellent assessment, marking and pupil involvement in checking their own work ensure that pupils always make the best progress.
- Many children enter the early years with identifiable learning needs, but the school meets these exceptionally well. The outdoor area is well utilised but lacking in resources to help fully promote children's active learning and physical development.
- The support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. Consequently, pupils' behaviour and relationships with adults and each other are outstanding. Their attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils say they feel extremely safe and very well cared for.
- There are excellent systems in place for checking the school's work. Outstanding planning and staff training ensure that the school is very well placed to maintain high quality teaching and pupils' outstanding achievement.
- The school has excellent partnerships with parents, working together to promote the highest levels of achievement and personal development for pupils.
- Governors are fully involved in all aspects of the school's work and hold the school to account exceptionally well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in nine lessons and in a range of shorter visits. One observation was conducted with the headteacher.
- The inspector completed a scrutiny of pupils' work, including that from last year.
- The inspector spoke to groups of pupils and to parents who picked up their children from school in the afternoon, and several who attended the weekly parent drop-in sessions at the school.
- The inspector took account of 16 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, as well as 18 questionnaires from staff.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, staff and the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of school documentation, including records of pupils' performance, evaluations of the quality of teaching over time and short- and long-term plans for improvement. Safeguarding procedures were also scrutinised.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils read and checked the school's information about progress in reading.

Inspection team

Nigel Cromey-Hawke, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of girls is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, with the proportion speaking English as an additional language well above average, including a significant proportion within the early years that are in the first stage of language acquisition.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above average and constitutes a majority of the school population. 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 supported through school action is well above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational need, is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school operates a before and after-school club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further enhance the development of children in the early years by extending the resources for outdoor play and learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school benefits considerably from the high aspirations and excellent leadership of its headteacher. He has led an unrelenting drive towards the highest levels of achievement and personal development since the previous inspection. The staff and governing body are fully committed in their support for this and morale is rightly high.
- Outstanding teamwork helps ensure a fully coherent approach to pupils' learning. There is very effective sharing of expertise across staff. Both the headteacher and staff with responsibilities for the curriculum, the learning of disadvantaged pupils and pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, and the use of assessment have shared their skills and successes with other schools to help promote wider school improvement. The headteacher has acted with great success as executive consultant to other schools and overseen their significant levels of improvement. Local authority support for the school has been light touch since the previous inspection.
- There is excellent monitoring and support for teaching. This involves lesson observations, very regular analysis of pupils' progress and work, and pupil consultations by both staff and governors.
- Additional funding to support the learning of vulnerable pupils has been used to excellent effect, as shown by their outstanding achievement.
- Performance management targets are very challenging, but willingly engaged with by staff and supported by high quality training. They are closely linked to high quality school planning and have a very positive effect upon improving pupils' progress.
- The excellent curriculum takes full account of the skills and knowledge pupils are required to learn. There is a very clear focus upon developing key skills of literacy and numeracy, with an unrelenting focus upon pupils' ability to develop their reading skills. The programme for pupils' personal, social and health education is outstanding and, as a result, the impact of the school's provision upon pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional.
- The school utilises its additional funding for school sport to very good effect. Gymnastics, multi-sports, tag-rugby and swimming for older pupils have all been introduced or extended, and the school's analysis of the impact of this show increased levels of participation, skills and awareness of health issues amongst pupils and greatly enhanced staff skills.
- The school communicates with its parents very well, especially through its website, Facebook page, texting and frequent parent drop-in and family learning sessions. Parents responding to both Parent View, a recent whole school survey and in discussions with the inspector were virtually unanimous in their support for every aspect of the school's work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The excellent governing body provides very good support to the school and is very well informed about the quality of teaching, helped by governors' participation in lesson observations. Governors play a very effective part in performance management procedures using their very good understanding of national performance information and how the school's performance relates to this to reward excellence in teaching and address any emerging areas of underperformance. This has resulted in outstanding teaching over time within the school.
 - Governors make very regular visits during the school day, not only as part of their checking activities but also to support activities such as reading and religious education sessions. Pupils and staff benefit considerably from governors' expertise, for example, in finance and safeguarding. Statutory duties are fulfilled to a high standard in these respects, as well as in the allocation and checking on the impact of pupil premium and sport funding, which are both used to increase staffing levels and expertise.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Together with their excellent attitudes, this makes a significant contribution to their learning. They are very polite and well mannered, keen to learn and delight in telling about their achievements and how much they enjoy their learning. Pupils show their support for the school through their above average attendance. Many attend the before and after-school clubs.
- The school works very hard and with great success to promote children's sense of pride in the school and in their own learning. Outdoor residential experiences build understanding, maturity and teamwork at the start of the year in Years 5 and 6. Excellence in behaviour and endeavour is recognised through weekly awards for each class that are witnessed by the whole school, and often many parents, in assemblies.

- In lessons pupils settle quickly and always respond immediately to adults' requests. They collaborate very well and enjoy learning together. Pupils report that learning is never slowed because of others' behaviour, which demonstrates the school's undoubted success at fostering positive relationships.
- Pupils say that they greatly enjoy the tasks that they are given for homework, describing the research they often undertake to learn about a new topic such as how electricity is made or the history of their local area.
- Pupils say they have a very good understanding of the different forms of bullying and that it is extremely rare. Any small behaviour lapses are always dealt with either by pupils themselves, such as through the Key Stage 2 pupils who act as 'Infant Monitors', or by staff. The school's records confirm this; for example, there have been no exclusions for many years. Parents are also very confident about the lack of bullying, many saying they have no experience of it.
- Pupils delighted in telling the inspector of the work of the school council and their various collections for charity. Pupils feel they have a real voice within the school, describing how they contribute to assemblies, school planning, visits, the use of playtime and feedback on the quality of teaching.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. All necessary checks on adults are carried out and staff are well trained in child protection. Site security is very well monitored and the school takes its responsibilities in safeguarding very seriously.
- Pupils are taught about the dangers of various types of behaviour such as the misuse of electronic media, bullying and substance misuse. They respond very well by discussing these dangers with maturity and common sense.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Much teaching over time across the school and in most subjects is outstanding and never less than consistently good. As a result, almost all pupils currently in the school are making sustained progress that leads to outstanding achievement.
- Staff plan highly challenging tasks which ensure that pupils make the very best progress they can. The mixed-age classes are used to very good effect to ensure that the needs of both rapid and slower learners are met. Highly accurate and frequent assessment and pupil progress meetings ensure that pupils' achievement is regularly reviewed.
- A major factor in ensuring pupils' clear understanding before moving on in their learning is the school's 'fix it time' at the start of each lesson. The previous days' work is subject to adult marking of the highest quality, which often includes repeat or extension tasks for pupils that emerge from this scrutiny. Pupils have to respond to this feedback immediately and write a comment on how they have done this. Pupils assess each other's responses and write a further comment, using success guidelines provided by the teacher. The impact of this practice upon pupils' learning, but also upon their critical thinking and spiritual, moral and social skills, is exceptional.
- All pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 have individual learning targets that challenge them to make the best progress they can. The learning objectives of any lesson are made highly explicit to all pupils and their understanding of these is checked thoroughly at regular points throughout lessons by teachers and their assistants. The inspector witnessed repeated occasions where learning was advanced significantly during the middle of lessons when adults had taken small breakaway groups to focus upon emerging difficulties.
- The contribution of teaching assistants and other trained adults, including members of the governing body, upon learning is exceptional. Specialist language and numeracy support sessions take place throughout each day, often initiated by communication with the highly skilled special educational needs coordinator or the intervention support leader. These ensure that, despite the often high levels of need within any class, the teaching of reading, writing, communication and mathematics is highly effective, cohesively planned and implemented across the curriculum.
- The school has focused with great success upon extending the learning of its most-able pupils through classroom extension work, but also has a dedicated programme of additional learning devised and sometimes staffed in conjunction with the local high school. As a result, last year the proportion of pupils gaining the highest levels in national testing in mathematics exceeded the national average.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The skills of the vast majority of children that enter the early years are significantly below those typical of children of their age. A significant minority of children have identified learning difficulties and many are in

the very early stages of learning English. The school's own very comprehensive and accurate assessment data and inspection evidence show that from these starting points, children make excellent progress.

- Pupils' attainment by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 in English and mathematics in national testing varies year on year due to differences in the level of pupils' learning needs. Attainment in national testing in 2013 in Year 2 remained at low levels, but this reflected exceptionally high proportions of pupils with identified learning needs within this small class, as well as a high proportion of such pupils moving into the class close to the end of Year 2.
- Attainment across the school in the last year in all year groups exceeded national expectations in English and mathematics. This is because of the long-term impact of outstanding teaching and levels of support provided by the school that very successfully overcome the often complex learning needs of many pupils and above average levels of mobility in some classes.
- The national Year 1 phonics screening check results have varied from year to year due to differing starting points and levels of need. Excellent progress by pupils ensures that by the end of both Years 2 and 6 attainment in reading is above average.
- The most-able pupils are challenged especially well and consistently exceed the levels expected for their age across the school. This is because they have a very good understanding of the key principles of both literacy and numeracy and can use them to very good effect in their writing and calculation work, even when presented with unfamiliar tasks or problems. Excellent partnership-working with the local high school has provided the most able with a rich and challenging programme of additional learning, as well as teaching by the high school staff. The impact of this is seen, for example, in the very high number of pupils who gained the highest levels of national testing in Year 6 in mathematics last year.
- The key priority of raising the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in writing over the last two years has been very successful. By Year 6, the vast majority of pupils complete well-organised tasks and show especially good levels of punctuation, spelling and grammar, as evidenced in above average levels in national testing in this area.
- High expectations of the presentation of work have resulted in often excellent handwriting and recording of number work. This helps pupils to correct their own and others' work for accuracy and to calculate appropriately. By Year 6, pupils are confident mathematicians, as shown by their above average and rapidly improving attainment, and their application of these skills in other subjects.
- From each of their starting points, the proportions of pupils making expected progress and the proportions exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics are high compared to national figures. This is especially the case with disadvantaged pupils. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils is above that of other pupils nationally and in the school. Boys' achievement across the school broadly matches that of girls.
- Excellent commitment to equality of opportunity is very evident. There is high-quality in-class support and special support programmes to help boost learning. These help disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language to make the best progress in their learning. Exceptional levels of achievement are evident across many subjects. The use of technology to extend learning has been extended significantly since the previous inspection to great effect, and high quality learning is evident especially within the arts, history and geography and personal, social and health education.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children settle into the early years setting quickly, helped by the excellent groundwork carried out by the school to welcome families and very quickly assess each child's interests and needs. An extensive range of expertise is available to support children in their development from the time they enter, including specialist language teaching assistants, speech and language therapy and behaviour support.
- Children make consistently high rates of progress in relation to their starting points, with the vast majority reaching a good level of development on exit from Reception last year. As a result of the excellent quality care children receive, helped by high levels of adult staffing, including weekly visits by specialist members of the governing body, all groups of children make sustained progress that leads to outstanding achievement.
- A major strength of the setting is the rigour and frequency of its assessment of children's learning. Adults constantly monitor each child's development, recording it electronically throughout all indoor and outdoor activities and use this to inform their high quality short-term planning of activities.
- There is a very good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities, and every opportunity is taken to conduct individual adult and child sessions to assess their understanding and move it further forward. The

inspector witnessed excellent practice, for example, in the nursery, where children drew around each other's body to support a theme on 'ourselves' that then resulted in both written identification of parts of the body and exploration of these within play activities in the outdoor area. Adult discussion with each child then gauged their understanding and informed future activities.

- The early years environment is stimulating and exceptionally well organised so that educational programmes reflect rich and imaginative experiences, especially indoors, that meet the needs of children exceedingly well. The outdoor area is very well used, especially as a stimulus for language and number work. The school recognises the need to extend its facilities here, however, to further extend children's active learning and physical development, notably their co-ordination, control and movement.
- Adults within the setting have high expectations of behaviour and learning. Clear routines are quickly established and high levels of children's engagement, cooperation and activity are expected, monitored and maintained throughout each day. Children find this reassuring, and together with the frequent praise they receive, and the animated recaps of their learning at the end of each session, they are highly motivated and eager to join in. Staff are particularly insistent on children listening closely to adults and to each other so that they are fully aware of what is going on and what they are doing.

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	119657
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	448914

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Jordan
Headteacher	Mr J Brown
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2010
Telephone number	01254 234924
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