

Markland Hill Primary School

Markland Hill, Bolton, Lancashire, BL1 5EJ

Inspection dates 22–23 October 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.

- Standards in this outstanding school have improved in all areas since the previous inspection.
- The headteacher's work to enrich the lives of pupils and ensure that they achieve well is exemplary. Together with her outstanding senior leadership team, and dedicated staff, she has ensured that the school has gone from strength to strength over the last three years.
- Governors know the school exceedingly well. They spend time talking to pupils about their learning, finding out about the quality of teaching and ensuring that excellent standards are maintained.
- Pupils' behaviour is of the highest possible standard. They are welcoming, inquisitive, passionate about their learning, and take on their responsibilities as prefects and play leaders in earnest.
- The school is well on the way to fully implementing its outstanding new curriculum, which is already engaging and exciting pupils and supporting their excellent progress.
- The school's work to develop all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is exceptionally effective.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained and dedicated to their work. They know pupils very well, ensure that learning is both interesting and exciting, and set exceptionally high standards for all pupils.
- The teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds) is outstanding, and has been so for the last three years.
- Aside from a dip in performance in mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling in 2013 in Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in all subjects has been above average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 for several years.
- Pupils' performance is now back on track and was significantly above average in all subjects, including reading and writing, by the time they left Year 6 in 2014.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils make good and often outstanding progress throughout the school. This includes disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils.
- The vast majority of parents are of the opinion that their children are happy at school, and are unanimous in their view that they are safe and well looked after.
- The early years is led and managed exceptionally well. The excellent work of teachers and teaching assistants coupled with rich and varied learning experiences helps to ensure that children make outstanding progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching for small groups of pupils, and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read. Some lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised during lessons and separately with senior staff.
- Inspectors considered 46 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own surveys of parents' views.
- A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority and a telephone conversation was held with the school's education consultant. Inspectors looked at the responses to a questionnaire completed by 22 members of staff.
- Two meetings were held with a total of three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- A range of school documents were examined. These included the school's review of its own performance, data on pupils' progress, records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching, external evaluations of the school's work, records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila O'Keeffe

Additional Inspector

Mujahid Ali

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is just above average. A below average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- All early years provision is full time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection there have been a number of new appointments including the headteacher, the Chair of Governors and four teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that the very small minority of pupils whose achievement is not quite as good as it should be are continually supported to ensure that they quickly catch up to their peers.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and senior leaders are unrelenting in their pursuit of excellence and are of the opinion that only the best is good enough. They are well supported by very capable teachers and teaching assistants and by a governing body that is both supportive, and challenging.
- The quality of pupils' learning has improved since the previous inspection. Decisive action taken by the headteacher to challenge teaching when it has not been effective enough has helped to ensure that teaching has improved too and is outstanding,
- Subject leaders are exceptionally well trained, and well respected for their work both within their cluster of schools and the local authority. They are fully involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning and play a crucial role in mentoring and coaching teachers who are new to the school. They ensure that teachers are supported in meeting their targets by regularly monitoring pupils' progress. The strategies put in place to improve standards in mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling were highly effective in boosting pupils' performance in 2014.
- The school's new curriculum is well on its way to being fully implemented. Pupils are very much aware that their learning has changed and are fully embracing it. Through their Fairtrades theme, pupils explore a wide variety of topics ranging from the Romans in Year 4, farming in Reception and the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Years 5 and 6. All themes provide excellent opportunities for pupils to practice their reading, writing and mathematical skills, engage in creative musical and art-based activities and debate about issues of morality linked to, for example, historical and modern slavery.
- All aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are exceptionally well developed. Pupils are very responsible and are skilled at debating ideas and working together. They have excellent first-hand opportunities to meet religious leaders and visit various places of worship including churches, mosques and Hindu cultural temples. A wide variety of religious artefacts in school, relating to Judaism for example, help to bring learning to life.
- Pupils' knowledge of life in modern Britain is good. This is because the school celebrates its cultural diversity and provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures and traditions through its exceptionally well thought out curriculum.
- The school is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all. For instance, through good use of the pupil premium funding, the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are constantly narrowing.
- The school's systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are highly effective and have enabled senior leaders to identify the rare instances where teaching has not been good enough.
- The school is as passionate about teachers' learning as it is about pupils' learning and works exceptionally well within its cluster of schools to develop teacher programmes. All staff who spoke to inspectors indicated that this has helped to improve their teaching.
- The school works exceptionally well with the local authority with which it shares its expertise in, for example, assessing the quality of pupils' writing. In addition to this the local authority has brokered support for the school. This has included a full review of teaching and learning.
- The school takes care to ensure that it has effective arrangements for safeguarding its pupils and all statutory requirements in this respect are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors' support for the school and knowledge about its performance is exemplary. They work exceptionally well with all staff, and are committed to working closely with the school to ensure that it maintains high standards.
 - Governors know that the quality of teaching is outstanding, because they ask questions, receive regular reports from senior leaders, and come into school to see for themselves. They have authorised training and know that it has been effective in helping the school to raise standards even further.
 - Governors receive detailed information from the headteacher on teachers' performance and only reward teachers for their work if they are satisfied that they have met their demanding targets.
 - Governors know that the primary school sports fund is used very effectively, and that working alongside professional running, hockey and football coaches has strengthened teachers' practice and helped to further develop the health and well-being of pupils.
 - Governors are fully aware that the homework club and one-to-one support for disadvantaged pupils is helping to eliminate the gap between their performance and that of their classmates across the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' attendance is exceptionally high, and they love coming to school to learn with their friends. Their behaviour is exemplary at all times. This includes when at play, during lunch and when moving around inside the school. Their attitudes and approach to learning are outstanding.
- Pupils relish all the opportunities that they have to take on responsibilities. This was demonstrated in two assemblies where Year 6 pupils were proud to bring Key Stage 1 pupils into the school hall. As one Year 6 pupil explained, 'we never tell people how to behave, but sometimes we remind them of the rules'.
- Pupils enjoy their roles as peer mediators, and are trained to help their classmates resolve minor issues. As play leaders they are happy to ensure that no Key Stage 1 children are left alone during play time, and as digital leaders they like to help both their classmates and, on occasions, teachers by offering 'computing solutions'.
- Pupils are very welcoming and exceptionally eager to talk about and share their work. They are respectful towards each other and adults, come to school neatly dressed and are proud to wear their various badges and caps denoting their different responsibilities.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils are adamant that bullying rarely if ever happens and said that if it did that there would be serious consequences. The school's behaviour logs show that pupils break the rules very infrequently.
- Pupils have a very well developed understanding of prejudice-based bullying. Key Stage 2 pupils' understanding is extensive. Pupils are of the opinion that 'you should not judge people by the colour of their skin' and that no one should be treated badly because they are different.
- The vast majority of parents are of the opinion that bullying is rare, and always dealt with. Teachers are also of this opinion, and inspection evidence supports it.
- Pupils' knowledge of how to stay safe while using the internet is excellent. They know to 'think before you click', never to give personal information out over the internet and to always seek advice if they are not sure about the safety of a website. They fully understand that cyber bullying can take place on mobile phones, hand-held games, and anything that is connected to the internet.
- Pupils have a very well developed understanding of how to stay safe on roads. This is helped by their comprehensive training on safe cycling. Various visitors from the police, ambulance and fire services address whole school during assemblies and help to develop pupils' excellent understanding of safe and unsafe situations.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the learning needs of all pupils. They set challenging tasks and activities which ensure that pupils are always engaged in their learning and consistently making good or outstanding progress.
- Pupils learn in lively, stimulating classrooms and are excited about their learning. Those who spoke to inspectors said that their new creative curriculum was both interesting and challenging and that they enjoyed the 'wow' activities, including educational visits and residential opportunities, that they have either at the start, or end of new topics.
- Teachers have exceptionally high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving and are highly skilled at setting them challenging activities. This was evident in a class where Year 1 and 2 pupils were engaged in a wide variety of tasks. All pupils, including those with special educational needs made outstanding progress with their reading, writing and spelling activities because they were set at just the right level and teachers made their expectations clear. The most able could read and understand their learning objective which was to 'segment and blend words', others happily read, while those who needed extra help with their reading were supported outstandingly well by teaching assistants.
- The vast majority of pupils know how to improve their learning. They regularly refer to their individual learning targets in their books and correct any errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar or calculations during the 'reflection time' which they have at the beginning of lessons.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are exceptionally well-trained and regularly use information on pupils'

performance to plan activities in class. Their highly effective partnership was evident throughout the course of the inspection.

- Pupils work exceptionally well together and are very attentive when listening to what their classmates have to say. This was illustrated in a class where Year 5 and 6 pupils were writing about the significance of various signs and symbols associated with Judaism. Having researched the area, they debated on the meaning of the menorah (candle holder) and kippur (cap) and their role in the Jewish faith.
- The teaching of mathematics has greatly improved and is exceptionally well taught. Pupils' books show that they are provided with many opportunities to apply their calculation skills to problem solving activities. All pupils enjoy competing with their classmates in their regular sixty second challenges based on such things as the times tables. The school's most able mathematicians are constantly expected to push their learning to its limits. This includes Reception, where such children are highly skilled in recognising the characteristics of different shapes, and in Years 5 and 6 where they are regularly challenged to design and devise rules for mathematical games.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- After a dip in the standards in mathematics, spelling, punctuation and grammar at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013, unvalidated data for 2014 shows that at the end of Year 6 in 2014 standards were similar to pupils' previous outstanding achievement up until 2012.
- At the end of Key Stage 1 standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been well above average for the last two years. Unvalidated data for 2014 shows that these exceptionally high standards have been maintained.
- Children enter Reception with a range of skills in different areas of learning. Most make outstanding progress throughout the school. By the end of Year 6 in 2014 the proportion of pupils making outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than average. In the rare instances where previous teaching has not been good enough, the progress of a small number of pupils has been adversely affected. The school has taken decisive action to make sure that these pupils are rapidly making up lost ground.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved significantly, and was outstanding by the time they left school at the end of Year 6 in 2014. This is because teachers have worked tirelessly to ensure that pupils know their 'non-negotiables', the school's term for times tables, calculations and problem solving. Pupils are excited about mathematics and relish the opportunity to compete with each other and meet the challenges presented by their teachers.
- Pupils' excellent writing is evident throughout the school in classrooms, corridors, and in their books. Teachers are very careful to develop their technical writing skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling without stifling their creative skills. Teachers take all opportunities to ensure that pupils can practise their writing skills in all subjects. In 2014 progress across all year groups was outstanding and attainment at the end of Year 6 was well above average.
- All classes have well-resourced reading areas, and pupils can access a large collection of books in the school library. Pupils are expert in assessing the quality of each other's reading and are masters at making their reading interesting by reading in character. Less able readers use their phonic skills (linking letters and the sounds they make) exceptionally well to sound out and read unfamiliar words. The results of the Year 1 national check on pupils' skills in phonics in 2014 was well above average, as they have been for the last three years.
- Regular pupil progress meetings ensure that the progress of all groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is at least consistently good, and often outstanding.
- No meaningful comparisons can be made between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school, or nationally, in 2014 because of their very small numbers. However, in Year 6 in 2013 numbers were greater. At this time the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in writing, and mathematics was similar to their class mates and to all pupils nationally, and just above both in reading.
- The exceptional care provided for pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, excellent partnerships with specialists and close monitoring of their performance helps to ensure that they enjoy learning and make at least good progress in reading writing and mathematics across the school.
- The most able pupils are constantly challenged to think hard in lessons. Their mature approach to learning helps to ensure that they make outstanding progress. They are afforded many opportunities to learn a wide range of subjects at higher levels at the local independent school in subjects such as mathematics, classics and music. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics

at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 in 2014 was well above average.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The leadership and management of the early years are outstanding, as is provision, the quality of teaching, work with parents, and the behaviour and progress of children.
- Children enter the Reception with a wide range of skills and abilities, and from a wide range of nurseries. Their skills in reading, writing and number are weaker than those in other areas of learning.
- Children get off to an excellent start in Reception because their teachers and teaching assistants are very caring and well trained, and because they learn in exceptionally stimulating indoor and outdoor learning areas. Owing to this and the high expectations that staff have of children, they make outstanding progress and the majority enter Year 1 with very well developed skills in all areas of learning.
- Children have excellent opportunities to explore, investigate and enjoy their learning. Specific attention is paid to writing, mathematics, reading and physical development. Staff are highly skilled at helping children to become confident in their learning and encourage them to explore and investigate different areas of learning, and to cooperate and work together.
- Phonics is taught exceptionally well. This helps to ensure the rapid development of children's speech and language skills, as well as their early writing, spelling and reading.
- Children are highly motivated and challenged through the effective use of questioning and different learning activities. This was exemplified well when children were learning about geometric shapes. Working in a number of different groups they showed a highly developed understanding of the characteristics of squares, triangles and circles. Almost all children knew the difference between two and three dimensional shapes, and the most able could say that a cube has six faces and eight corners.
- Staff constantly monitor and assess children's learning and progress. Weekly reviews of their learning help to ensure that planned learning activities are always appropriate to children's individual skills and abilities. The strong relationship that staff have with parents and their sharing of information on children's achievements ensure that assessments are accurate.
- Parents are happy that their children are exceptionally safe and achieving well.

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	105159
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	448893

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Bainbridge
Headteacher	Louise Close
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2009
Telephone number	01204 332626
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