

St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School

Queensway, Higher Folds, Leigh, Lancashire, WN7 2XG

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Outstanding leadership and sheer determination from the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been instrumental in the rapid improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the last inspection.
- Highly dedicated and supportive governors have shared this work and ensured all pupils now make good progress and fully enjoy learning in a new purpose-built school building.
- Leaders, managers and governors ensure high aspirations for each pupil to achieve their best. Together with the rapid improvements to the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make, this means the school is well placed to continue to improve
- Pupils' achievement is good. By the time all groups of pupils leave in Year 6, they achieve standards that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is good. The teachers new to the school have brought additional enthusiasm and skills and rapidly improved the quality of pupils' learning. Increasingly, teaching is now outstanding.
- With high-quality leadership and staff in place, children now get off to a good start to their learning in the early years.
- Pupils are polite and respectful. Their behaviour is good and, at times, outstanding. They follow the school's core Christian values well.
- Pupils feel safe and happy in school because, they say, 'Staff take care of us.' The parents inspectors spoke to agree fully with this.
- The curriculum is vibrant with plenty of opportunities for pupils to experience and excel in sports, music and art. As a result pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes, the work set is too difficult for those with special educational needs or, at other times, not hard enough to help the most able pupils achieve as well as they should.
- A small proportion of pupils are absent from school too often.
- The skills of new subject leaders in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in all areas of the curriculum are not fully effective.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 22 lessons or parts of lessons. Five lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body as well as groups of pupils.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2, 4 and 6, and spoke informally to pupils during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- There were too few responses received at the time of the inspection from the online questionnaire (Parent View) to consider, so the views of the parents who spoke to inspectors and those expressed through the school's own parental survey, were taken into account.
- The inspectors took account of the 30 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Clare Henderson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Shutt

Additional Inspector

Jeremy Barnes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium funding is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is 36.6%. This is well above the national average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- All pupils moved on to the one site when the new school building was completed in June 2014.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Since the previous inspection, seven members of the teaching staff have joined the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment and accelerate the progress they make in reading, writing and mathematics by making sure that work set is at the right level to match and extend to the maximum the capabilities of each pupil.
- Continue to support new subject leaders in their role of checking the quality of teaching and how well pupils learn in all subjects of the curriculum.
- Raise attendance further by continuing to work with the pupils and their families who are absent from school too often.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders and governors have moved this school forward significantly since the last inspection. Sweeping staff changes during this time, including the leadership of the early years, have improved considerably the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement in English and mathematics and their behaviour.
- Effective management of changes to staffing has ensured teachers new to the school have shadowed more senior middle leaders and are now beginning to be involved in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements in all subjects of the curriculum. This work is at an early stage of development, and so leadership is not yet outstanding overall.
- The high aspirations senior leaders have for the success of every pupil are shared by all staff who have worked closely together to achieve the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection.
- Performance management is well managed through effective appraisal, and pay awards are dependent upon teachers' performance in relation to pupils' progress. The effect of this strong support for teachers' professional development is summed up by a member of staff 'Management go above and beyond to help teaching staff reach their full potential.'
- Effective leadership from the special educational needs leader ensures that those pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all year groups. This ensures that the school is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and to tackling any discrimination.
- Although strong links exist with parents, senior leaders and governors acknowledge that they need to find additional ways of working with the families and pupils who are absent from school too often.
- Pupils find the interesting curriculum topics they study, such as 'Were the Tudors really terrible?' provide them with opportunities to express their opinions. They also gain an understanding of cultures and beliefs which are different from their own. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The actions the school takes to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding and interwoven meaningfully into all lessons and assembly times. The subjects taught are enhanced well by many extra-curricular opportunities, for instance, breakfast and homework clubs, playing an instrument, belonging to the school choir or to the many other clubs.
- The school physical education and sports premium fund is very well managed. This fund provides more sporting opportunities for pupils to take part in a wider range of sports, for instance, fencing and tag rugby. Better trained teachers ensure that pupils are taught skills very effectively and that some pupils participate in sporting events involving other schools. As a consequence, pupils are developing healthy lifestyles.
- The local authority has provided good support, particularly in managing the high number of staffing changes, and believes the leaders have the abilities to carry on making improvements.
- Partnerships with the parish, diocese, consultants and other schools are very effective and have enabled the school to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement significantly since the last inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the last inspection, governors have worked successfully with senior leaders and the diocese to provide pupils with the new school building. They have been involved fully in the drive to improve the quality of teaching and subsequent acceleration in pupils' progress. They understand well how teachers' performance is managed, and how any underperformance is tackled. They play a comprehensive part in identifying the priorities needed to improve the school and make sure that these plans and actions are reviewed regularly.
 - As a result of the increased training governors have received, they understand what information on pupils' performance indicates about how well the school is doing compared to others nationally. This means they are able to hold school leaders to account to improve the school further. They understand how their spending decisions and, in particular how extra funding, for example from the pupil premium, and physical education and school sports premium, is spent, and to what effect. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and members of the governing body carry out regular checks to make sure that pupils and staff are kept safe.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents, carers and staff agree.
- Behaviour observed by the inspectors in lessons was good and, at times, outstanding. Most pupils are keen to learn and work well with partners or when researching new information for themselves. This has a strong influence on their good achievement. School records show that behaviour is typically good in classes, around the school and over time.
- Pupils say behaviour in lessons, on the corridors and in the playground is good. Those groups of pupils inspectors spoke to in formal meetings, or informally, say that they feel safe and happy in school.
- The school has clear expectations of behaviour which most pupils willingly follow. Behaviour records are fully in place and the fairly new behaviour system is working well with more rewards for pupils' good behaviour outweighing sanctions given.
- Behaviour is not outstanding overall. Occasionally, when the work set is too difficult for those with special educational needs or, at other times, not hard enough to challenge the most-able, a few pupils can lose interest and not achieve as well as they could.
- Pupils are proud of their school and welcome the chances they have to take responsibilities. House and vice house captains and prefects in Year 6 address issues the younger pupils bring to their attention. For instance, they produced a computer presentation of ideas and instructions for games which the younger pupils could play to keep them occupied at break times. These roles help them to learn to act responsibly and prepare them well for their future lives.
- Pupils say bullying and racism is 'very, very rare' and that they are very happy with the way teachers deal with these. 'If we have our ups and downs we sort it out straight away' sums up their positive views. The school's records also confirm this. Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including internet bullying and that based on prejudice.
- Pupils are delighted with the rewards they receive, such as the opportunity some pupils from their school had to be a flag bearer for the Iran team at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games. This extends their cultural development and pride in belonging to their school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say, and their parents agree, that they feel safe and well supported at school. Pupils say teachers help them to stay safe. In all classes, including the early years, pupils are given computer safety reminders, as well as road, fire and bicycle safety advice.
- The pupils who spoke with inspectors enjoy thoroughly all the school has to offer. However, a few pupils who are absent from school too often do not benefit from the exciting range of before- and after-school clubs, including sports and music, which contribute well to their physical development and personal well-being.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly since the last inspection. As a result all pupils make good progress over time. Teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach and high expectations of what they want pupils to learn and of how they are to behave in lessons.
- Pupils willingly embrace their teachers' efforts to help them succeed. Classrooms are calm and, for the most part, there is a hardworking atmosphere. However, sometimes, when the work is not matched fully to pupils' learning capabilities a few pupils become distracted and do not achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils work happily together. When given the mathematical problem, for instance, of working out how much it costs to own a dog, they listen willingly to one another's calculations, working together as a team to solve the problem set. Such work makes them think hard as well as extending their enjoyment of mathematics.
- Teachers and highly skilled support staff pull together to ensure the checks they make of how well pupils are learning are accurate and are used well when planning the next lesson. Together, they check continually on pupils' progress over time so that any pupil falling behind where they should be in their learning is identified quickly and given further support. This enables disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs to participate fully in lessons and to make good progress.
- Teachers plan carefully for the most able pupils in each year group and generally present probing questions and activities that make them think deeply. However, sometimes this questioning is not as

effective. For example, when pupils are given repetitive questions in mathematics that they answer correctly but which do not always deepen their understanding sufficiently.

- Reading is taught well. Children develop a good knowledge of letters and their sounds in the early years and Key Stage 1. Pupils in Key Stage 2 develop wider reading skills through the good-quality library books available. They are familiar with a range of children's authors and enjoy completing comprehension and research activities for homework.
- Opportunities for drama such as re-enacting the Battle of Bosworth or reading a range of interesting play scripts and then writing and performing their own plays brings learning to life in an exciting and memorable way. Pupils are keen to say 'We are writers in our school.'
- Marking systems are of a good quality. Pupils follow up on the advice teachers provide for them to help them improve further their learning. Pupils are skilful at checking their own and one another's work. As a result, they are ready and prepared well to move on to the next step in their learning.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Their attainment is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave in Year 6.
- In the two years since the last inspection, standards, although remaining below average, have risen steadily in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1. This is as a result of the rigorous and accurate checks senior leaders make on pupils' progress.
- Pupils' progress accelerates well through Year 3 to Year 6. As a result, by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, pupils' attainment was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. These outcomes for all groups of pupils represent good progress from their individual starting points.
- School records show that the pupils currently in Year 1 to Year 6 make good and, for some, outstanding progress as the quality of the teaching they receive has improved.
- The most able pupils make good progress. However, it is not outstanding because, in some lessons, these pupils do not always achieve as well as they should. This is because they are not always given enough work which really makes them have to think hard and, as a result, achieve the higher levels of attainment.
- Pupils make good progress in phonics (sounds that letters make). Results of the national phonics screening check for Year 1 pupils have improved over the last two years and were close to the national average in 2014.
- The high emphasis on reading to extend pupils' comprehension, spelling and punctuation skills in a wide range of subjects are greatly enjoyed by pupils. This has accelerated their reading skills well.
- Pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to other pupils. Support staff give them close and often individual attention based on an accurate knowledge and understanding of their needs. However, sometimes, when these pupils are in whole-class lessons, the work set is too difficult and they can lose interest and not achieve their best.
- The school uses the pupil premium well to ensure the good progress of disadvantaged pupils and to close gaps between their attainment and that of others in their year groups. This is achieved through high quality support in small and often individual groups to develop reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- There was a two term difference between the Year 6 test results of disadvantaged pupils and others in reading, three terms in mathematics and four terms in writing in 2014. Their results were below the national average for all pupils in reading and mathematics by two terms and in writing by three terms. Any gaps this year between eligible pupils and others in all year groups are closing rapidly.

The early years provision

is good

- A high proportion, though not all of the children, begin in the Nursery or when they join in the Reception class, with weakness in their speech, communication and social skills.
- Children quickly learn to follow the early years routines because adults establish strong links with families through, for instance, home visits and on-going meetings in the Nursery and Reception classes to discuss what children will be learning in reading and how parents can help their children's learning at home.
- Children are safe and cared for well. They learn rapidly to share and to get along with each other. During the inspection, for instance, children included others in their play as they established a route to an imaginary fire and worked out what they would need to do to put out the fire. Skilful questioning from

adults extended children's language and understanding of the dangers of fire and how important it is to work together to achieve the goals set.

- Mathematical learning is built well into play, as children continue the fire theme solving a subtraction problem by working out if five dogs were in the blazing house and three were rescued how many were still to be saved. 'There are two more to save' says one child confidently.
- Learning is firmly based around children's interests. All the adults build skilfully on these to extend children's speaking, listening and mathematical skills, as well as their overall confidence. Adults have a clear knowledge of each child's needs. They record effectively and skilfully the children's progress electronically, building a comprehensive profile of children's progress and where the next steps are needed to accelerate learning further.
- Children's physical and social skills and their health and well-being are developed well through a good range of activities. Learning to climb, to make decisions and follow instructions, such as tidying up at the end of the session, all contribute well to this development.
- Children show good progress in developing confidence and concentration skills as they explore confidently letters and sounds, begin to read and practise their writing skills.
- The early years leader, appointed since the last inspection, provides excellent leadership and management. She has responded positively to a wealth of reports and advice given to improve outcomes for the children. A strong team has been forged with a clear vision for the future. The much improved purpose-built indoor and outdoor areas are impacting very favourably on standards and the checks carried out, by all adults, on how well children are learning, are rigorous.
- The exciting and high-quality provision is now having a good effect and, as a result, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development was closer to average proportions in 2014. This indicates children are prepared well for entry into Year 1.

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	106506
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	442347

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	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Damian Roach
Headteacher	Cathie Williams
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2013
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