

Westhead Lathom St James' Church of England Primary School

School Lane, Westhead, Ormskirk, L40 6HL

Inspection dates

19–20 November 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 James' is an extremely happy and harmonious school in which all children and staff are valued.
- Standards attained by pupils are well above average by the end of Year 6. They achieve exceptionally well, making rapid progress in all year groups in reading and especially in writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding. Teaching inspires pupils to achieve well and develop a genuine love of learning. However, on occasions teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation of their work is not high enough
- Pupils greatly enjoy school because learning is enriched by many memorable activities both in and out of lessons. These contribute extremely successfully to pupils' excellent personal, social, moral and spiritual development.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. They are polite and well mannered and take on responsibilities very sensibly.
- The school is very welcoming and caring. Relationships between pupils and adults are excellent, owing in part to the excellent example of adults and pupils, knowing they are all respected in this highly inclusive school.
- Staff and pupils are proud to be part of the school.
- The wide variety of topics, themes and activities provided, including the after-school clubs and visits, ensure that pupils develop skills in a broad range of subjects. However, on occasions opportunities are missed to develop pupils' skills in reading when they work in other subjects. Pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of education.
- Provision in the early years is outstanding. Children relish their time in the setting and are settled and confident.
- The extremely strong leadership and drive of the headteacher has been instrumental in the school's success. Leaders are focused on continually raising standards.
- Systems for managing the performance of staff are rigorous and are explicitly linked to securing pupils' rapid progress in English and mathematics.
- The governing body is highly skilled and effective at holding the school to account. Governors have an excellent understanding of the school, its strengths and how it can be even better.
- The school works very closely with parents, who are exceptionally positive about the education their children receive and the progress they make. They also believe that their children are safe and happy at school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in seven lessons, two of which were observed with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils from Year 3 and Year 6 read. Other evidence related to the quality of teaching over time was also gathered.
- The inspector observed the headteacher reporting back to the teachers on her findings regarding the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and middle leaders, six governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of pupils and a member of the local authority.
- The inspector took into account the 41 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector considered the views expressed in the 14 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed the school at work and scrutinised the work in pupils' books, the school's own data on pupils' current progress, improvement plans, planning and monitoring information and minutes of governing body meetings. Records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also considered.

Inspection team

Anthony Kingston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Westhead Lathom St James' CE is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, eligible for support through the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are in the care of the local authority.
- Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards even further in reading by providing pupils with more opportunities to apply and develop their skills across a range of subjects and topics.
- Improve the presentation of pupils' work by ensuring that expectations of how pupils present their work are consistently high.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides inspirational and exceptionally strong leadership. This has led to significant improvements, especially in teaching and achievement, since the previous inspection. She has made sure that other leaders, including governors, have also developed the skills and qualities they need. This view is reflected in the views of staff. For example, one said, 'We are led by an inspirational, aspirational and enthusiastic headteacher, who puts her heart into the school.'
- In this small school all teachers are leaders. Each is responsible for a range of subjects and is involved in monitoring the effectiveness of the school. For example, they have well-planned opportunities to monitor teaching and pupils' progress and thereby play a significant part in driving forward improvements. They are excellent role models in their own work.
- Leaders know each pupil as an individual. They monitor pupils' progress extremely carefully, responding immediately to any concerns that they may identify. As a result, any pupil who is in danger of falling behind is very quickly helped to get back on track. Leaders ensure that school assessments are accurate by comparing information across year groups and with other local schools.
- The leadership team has put in place a robust system to check the quality of teaching and for managing staff performance. Teachers feel supported by the headteacher and welcome feedback about their performance in lessons. Feedback is sharp and focused. Clear targets are set and training and support are given to ensure that they are met. This process has played a significant role in the improvement of teaching since the previous inspection.
- The school has benefited well from the support it receives from the local authority. The local authority feels that the school has made good progress since its previous inspection.
- Careful thought has been given to how leaders will maintain the extensive level of information they have on pupils' progress as the school implements the new National Curriculum. Plans are already under way to help staff to assess accurately the level that their pupils are working at and to measure the progress that they make.
- The curriculum is extremely well planned on a two-year rolling programme. It provides pupils with many memorable experiences. For example, Year 6 pupils develop business plans to set up enterprise projects and meet with a local bank manager to check on their viability. An exciting range of activities both in and out of lessons contributes extremely well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, pupils leave school very well prepared for the next stage of their education and later life. They develop tolerance and respect for others and are prepared very well for life in modern Britain.
- The school focuses well on improving pupils' healthy lifestyles and their physical well-being. The primary school sport funding has been used to introduce pupils to new sports, increase the opportunities for pupils to take part in inter-school tournaments and improve the skills of teachers. The impact of the effectiveness of the provision is evident in pupils' increased levels of participation.
- The school checks that all pupils have equal opportunity to succeed. Overall, the needs of all groups of pupils are identified promptly and support is provided where most needed.
- The school has a very strong partnership with parents. This was exemplified in discussions with parents and summed up by one who said, 'It's like an extended family. We couldn't ask for a more dedicated staff. They go beyond anyone's expectations.' The overwhelming positive response to the online parents' questionnaire (Parent View) reflects this view. For example, all respondents said they would recommend the school to other parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is highly effective. It plays an influential part in leading the school forward through ensuring that plans for development are fully focused on the most important aspects of school life. Governors are highly knowledgeable about the school and the community. They are kept extremely well informed by the headteacher and supplement this by making regular visits to the school to observe lessons and to speak with teachers and pupils. They have undertaken a wide and relevant range of training and as a result have an excellent understanding of how to fulfil their roles successfully. Consequently they are very skilled at analysing data and knowledgeable about how well the school is performing in comparison with others. They are, therefore, extremely well equipped to provide leaders with strong levels of challenge. Their systems for rewarding good teaching through performance management are very thorough and are very well understood by teachers. Financial management is rigorous. Governors ensure that all spending is focused sharply on improving provision for pupils. They make sure those resources, including the pupil premium, are used effectively to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The governing body makes sure that statutory requirements are met,

including those for safeguarding pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. It is praised by parents, pupils, staff and governors.
- The extremely positive attitude of pupils to their work is one of the key reasons why they do so well at school. Pupils develop a thirst for knowledge, because they know that their efforts and successes are valued. This was made clear by one pupil who said, 'Everyone is made to feel special here.'
- Pupils are proud of their school and speak highly of it. They respect the school environment, which is kept tidy and free from litter or coats and bags strewn across cloakrooms.
- They show maturity and make a good contribution to the school community by taking on many roles and responsibilities such as Play Leaders, Toy Shed Monitors and the organisation and running by Year 6 pupils of a pop-up café which serves hot drinks and cakes to parents. They also grow vegetables in the school's allotment, which are then cooked in the after-school 'Let's Get Cooking' club.
- Pupils carry out their responsibilities diligently because, as one pupil said, 'All the adults in our school care and do so much for us.'
- Around school, pupils are polite, calm, respectful and considerate of others. They understand the impact of their actions on others, and try to be kind and understanding at all times. Hence, the school remains a happy and welcoming place for all. Pupils quickly do as they are asked and follow school rules to the letter. They show respect for the school environment, playing their part in keeping it a clean, bright and attractive place to learn.
- Attendance is high. This is because pupils greatly enjoy school and are encouraged to attend regularly and on time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils and parents have total confidence in the school's ability to keep children safe.
- Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare, but they are very confident that any unacceptable behaviour is tackled very quickly by adults. They appreciate the 'worry box' because they know that it is regularly checked, so a problem will be sorted out almost immediately.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of what comprises bullying and the many forms that it can take. They explain the potential dangers they may face when using social media and know exactly what they should do if they have a concern.
- Activities such as cycling proficiency training, themes in assemblies such as making sensible choices and work in class about the inherent dangers of smoking and the misuse of drugs ensure that pupils are extremely clear about how to avoid potential dangers in later life.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching over time is outstanding overall.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. It is now never less than good and is often outstanding.
- Improvements in teaching have brought about accelerated progress and raised standards in reading, writing and mathematics over the past two years. Excellent use of pupil progress information means that teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are higher than previously. Teachers successfully plan learning activities that build on pupils' understanding from the previous lessons. As a result, pupils are appropriately challenged and make rapid gains in their learning.
- Teaching is characterised by high levels of enthusiasm, high expectations and excellent relationships. This approach to teaching has resulted in developing an excellent climate in which pupils can learn and feel safe. Consequently, pupils are inspired to learn and are prepared to work hard because they are not afraid of making mistakes.
- The teaching of linking letters and sounds (phonics) is outstanding. It sets pupils off enthusiastically on their journey to becoming avid readers. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to read and in guided reading they are helped to develop their comprehension and inference skills. However, on occasions opportunities for pupils to apply and further develop these skills across other subjects are missed.

- The teaching of mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. In pupils' books there is a good balance of calculations and problem-solving activities to which previously practised mathematical knowledge and skills can be applied. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils thoroughly enjoyed and became immersed in finding the missing angles in a challenging geometry investigation.
- The teaching of writing has also improved. Pupils write confidently and fluently, benefiting from regular opportunities to exchange ideas and talk through and plan how they intend to write. They apply their knowledge of punctuation and grammar skilfully as, for example in Year 3, where pupils successfully applied their knowledge of the use of subordinate clauses to improve the quality of their stories.
- Teaching assistants routinely liaise very closely with teachers assessing the effectiveness of their support to promote good standards of achievement. They are often responsible for specific group tuition, using an effective range of strategies to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs and those who are in danger of falling behind. They are skilled and highly effective in giving pupils a boost to their learning.
- Marking and feedback to pupils are effective. They help pupils to know exactly what they have done well and how to improve their work as they move on to new learning. In turn, pupils invariably respond to teachers' comments, thus making a good contribution to the eradication of errors and moving their learning on.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Most children join the school ready to learn with the skills and understanding they have already acquired. In the early years, they make good progress and most have a good level of development by the time they join Year 1.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are a little above average in Year 2 and almost one year ahead of the national average by Year 6. These standards represent significant improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to achieve even higher standards than those of the last two years.
- In 2014 the proportion of pupils who made expected and better than expected progress in reading, but especially in writing and mathematics, was well above average. Consequently, all Year 6 pupils reached the expected levels of attainment in writing and mathematics and virtually all in reading. The proportion reaching the higher Level 5 was high, compared to all pupils nationally. As a result, pupils leave primary school well prepared for the secondary school.
- Reading is a priority throughout the school so as to bring the standards in reading up to the level of that in writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds they make) is enabling younger pupils to tackle new and unfamiliar words with greater confidence. This is reflected in the high proportion of six-year-olds who achieved the expected level and above in the recent national screening check on phonics.
- As pupils move through the school they are encouraged to read often and extensively. Consequently they develop a love of reading. This was exemplified by a group of Year 6 pupils who agreed that, 'by using your imagination you can get lost in a book and feel as though you are a part of the story.' However, some opportunities to further develop pupils' reading by encouraging them to research and retrieve information across a range of subjects and topics are missed.
- Pupils write with confidence and make outstanding progress. They are provided with many opportunities to write throughout the school and quickly develop an enjoyment of writing. Pupils increasingly use their skills to write for different subjects and purposes and carefully consider the use of vocabulary to engage the reader.
- In mathematics, younger pupils quickly learn different ways to add and subtract without needing to use resources, such as counting blocks. As they get older, pupils carry out increasingly complex calculations and use this knowledge extremely well to solve problems.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements. However, they do not always present their work neatly, particularly their written work. This is because not all teachers have consistently high expectations of how pupils present their work.
- The most-able pupils make outstanding progress. They respond extremely well to the high level of challenge invariably given in lessons. Consequently, an even larger proportion of pupils is on track to attain higher levels in national assessments this year.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar and sometimes better progress than their peers, because their needs are met very well under the expert guidance of the teachers and teaching assistants.

- There are too few disadvantaged pupils in the school for an analysis of their progress and attainment data to generate meaningful comparisons with other pupils nationally. However, the additional funding given to the school for these pupils is used very effectively to provide well-targeted support through additional learning assistants. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils throughout the school make exceptionally good progress.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children's skills and understanding on entry to the early years vary from year to year but, over time, most are ready to learn. Children join a mixed-age class where they are taught alongside Year 1 pupils from whom they learn routines and skills. Children settle into school life quickly, are keen to learn, play together well and are well-behaved.
- Children make good progress from their starting points on entry to the Reception class and start Year 1 as confident learners, with virtually all having the skills and understanding expected for their age and many exceeding expected levels.
- Excellent induction procedures on entry to the Reception class ensure that children settle quickly. These procedures include written information and parental visits to school, as well as staff visits to children's homes. These help to provide a detailed picture of each child's needs and interests and inform the teacher and teaching assistant about the starting points once the children start school.
- The quality of teaching is now outstanding. Adults constantly ask questions and check on children's progress to ensure that activities throughout the week are well focused and meet children's varying needs.
- The teaching of phonics is particularly outstanding and helps children begin to read and spell unfamiliar words.
- Teaching assistants are an invaluable resource and skilfully support and nurture children to develop skills in all areas of learning. They work as a strong team to plan learning, to check children's progress and to record small steps of development.
- Behaviour is excellent in the early years unit. Children are clearly happy and content. Adults sensitively explain how to behave, what the routines are and gently encourage children to work and play together and to support each other. Safety and care are given very high priority by staff.
- The leadership and management of the early years are excellent. Any issue that could impede learning is quickly recognised and acted upon. The close working relationship the early years staff have with parents is paying dividends in all areas of children's learning.

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	119377
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	448909

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lyn Jackson
Headteacher	Alison Albion
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2010
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