

St Gabriel's CofE Primary School

Ellis Ashton Street, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside, L36 6BH

Inspection dates 24–25 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The headteacher and senior leaders provide strong and clear direction for the school and have brought rapid improvement over the past year. Consequently, pupils' achievement, which dipped in 2014, is now rising swiftly.
- Good management of teaching and learning is a particular success, which has resulted in improved standards and quicker progress throughout the school.
- Leadership of the early years is good. Consequently, children get off to a good start in their education.
- Governors check the school's work rigorously. They provide strong challenge and effective support.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite and considerate towards others. Their positive attitudes to learning help them to make good progress. Pupils feel safe in school and their attendance is above average.
- The quality of teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Pupils say, 'Our teachers are the best.' There is good provision for all pupils, whatever their abilities.
- From below typical starting points for their age, pupils make good progress. Standards are improving at both key stages and progress is accelerating quickly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards reached in writing and mathematics are not as high as they could be. The quality of writing across the curriculum is too variable. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of multiplication tables are not secure enough to enable them to do mental and written calculations speedily.
- The presentation of pupils' work, the quality of marking and the level of challenge it offers pupils are not as well developed in other subjects as they are in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons, three of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with members of staff, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, parents and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 43 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the views of parents who responded in writing and spoke personally to inspectors.
- The school's work was observed along with a range of documentation including: national assessment data and the school's own assessments; minutes from governors' meetings; external reports; the school's own view of its work; curriculum information; safeguarding documents and samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila O'Keeffe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, supported by the pupil premium, is double the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The school does not meet current floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Provision for children in the early years is part-time in Nursery and full-time in Reception.
- Before- and after-school care is provided by the adjacent children's centre. This is not managed by the governing body and is subject to separate inspection arrangements. The children's centre's most recent report is available on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk
- The headteacher was appointed to her post in September 2014, having served as acting headteacher for one year.
- Leadership is supported by the headteacher of Cronton CofE Primary School, which is a local outstanding school and staff at St Gabriel's work closely with the staff of that school. The diocese and local authority also provide support.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further, especially in writing and mathematics, by:
 - developing consistently good writing across the whole curriculum
 - making sure that pupils, in Key Stage 2 especially, have secure knowledge and understanding of multiplication tables and how to use them to calculate quickly and check their work
 - expecting greater consistency in the good presentation of pupils' work.
- Ensuring that teachers' marking and feedback challenge all of pupils' work with the same rigour that is applied in literacy and numeracy books.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's leadership has refreshed the school and brought new determination among all staff members to succeed. All recognise the headteacher's purposeful leadership and clear direction and know that the school is improving rapidly. As a result, teaching and pupils' behaviour are good.
- The school has benefited well from reviews of its work carried out by the local authority. These have clarified school priorities and given staff the impetus to move forward. A highly productive link with a local outstanding school has also brought many benefits. Opportunities to observe other teachers' work, for example, have helped to improve the quality of teaching. Comparing standards in pupils' work has greatly improved teachers' confidence and ability to assess and check pupils' progress accurately and plan their next steps. The local authority recognised how far the school has moved on since its last review and is confident about leaders' ability to drive further improvements.
- Senior leaders are highly focused on accelerating progress and raising standards throughout the school. They fully understand that pupils' progress is linked to the quality of teaching and continually check both. They provide good support and challenge for the headteacher and are an effective bridge of communication between the headteacher, staff and governors.
- The management of teaching and learning is very effective. Robust systems for teachers' performance management have led to improvements in teaching and a rapid strengthening of performance in the school. This is having a positive impact on pupils' current rates of progress and standards are rising quickly.
- Middle leaders, responsible for individual subjects, have skilfully combined what was already good in the curriculum with the requirements of the new primary curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to explore new topics and use their skills in different ways. They enjoy learning in lessons as well as in the range of clubs and visits that provide extra richness to their school day.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils gain a good understanding of different cultural communities and develop very positive attitudes towards others. These are rooted strongly in the Christian traditions in the school which help pupils to have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils learn the importance of the democratic process, of taking responsibility within their community and showing tolerance towards others. They are prepared well for their future lives in modern Britain.
- Leaders make good use of the primary school sport funding. Pupils have noticed the impact in the increased opportunities for sport. For example, 'Commando Joe' is a popular coach who regularly visits the school and ensures that all pupils do some physical activity to improve their well-being. Teachers improve their subject knowledge and teaching skills in physical education by working alongside the specialist coaches who come to the school. Pupils take part in more competitive tournaments, and use of the local leisure centre opens up further opportunities for them.
- Governors manage the pupil premium effectively. The effect of the funding is discussed at regular governors' meetings; its use and impact on standards are given thorough consideration. As a result, equality of opportunity is promoted well. Safeguarding arrangements meet all requirements. Policies and written procedures are clear and there has been extensive staff training about keeping pupils safe and securing their well-being. Leaders check pupils' attendance closely and provide first-class support via the learning mentor should there be any specific difficulties regarding attendance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Strong governance has steered the school successfully through a period of transition in leadership and strengthened the school's effectiveness. Governors know the school well, anticipate its needs and support it effectively through the actions taken. Governors are familiar with the way that national assessment data are presented and compare the school's performance accurately with that of schools nationally. Reports from school leaders provide a clear overall picture of the quality of teaching in the school, which governors verify through their checks on pupils' work, learning walks and staff discussions. They are familiar with the principles of the current pay policy; they review recommendations carefully to reward successful teaching and challenge that which does not meet expectations. Financial management is efficient, including the management of the pupil premium and primary school sport funding.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy school because, they say, it has a family atmosphere and grown-ups are supportive and helpful.
- Attendance is above average and most pupils arrive punctually.
- Pupils contribute well to the life and ethos of the school. They dress smartly in uniform, are mindful of one another and treat everyone with courtesy and politeness.
- Pupils give generously to charities and willingly take on additional duties as school council members, playground buddies or 'bully busters' who meet regularly and report to members of staff.
- The work of the CATS (Christian action team) is noteworthy for the way that the group helps to promote good relationships throughout the school. Members keep a special watch for pupils demonstrating positive values or 'being nice' and add that information to their 'friendship wall'. Their purpose, they say, is to help people to live their lives well.
- The introduction of assertive mentoring, a system that gives pupils more responsibility for their own learning and behaviour, is having positive results. Pupils have more ownership of what they do. They share their ideas with teachers and generally do their best to live up to expectations.
- Pupils' attentiveness and good behaviour in lessons contribute significantly to their good progress.
- Pupils behave well around the school and show that they know how to behave in different situations, such as in the dining room or when attending church assemblies.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils are taught the various ways that bullying can occur, including cyber-bullying. They also learn how to keep safe outside of school from visitors who talk to them about 'roads, rivers and railways' and the safe use of the internet.
- They state firmly that there is no bullying in school and that name-calling is rare. They feel safe in the playground where they are well supervised and have lots to occupy them. Playground buddies are on hand to lend support during the rare 'difficult' moments and their work is appreciated by other pupils.
- Most parents agree with their children's views that they are well cared for. Comments such as 'The school asks for nothing but gives everything' are indicative of the way many parents feel about the all-round care that the school provides.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have responded extremely well to the opportunities they have to develop their skills and improve their performance since the change in the school's leadership. They are highly motivated; they greatly value opportunities to work with other schools and test new ideas in their own classrooms.
- The drive to ensure that all pupils make good progress is shared by teaching assistants who are a crucial part of the teaching team. They are skilled and knowledgeable about what they do and work very effectively alongside teachers to ensure that all groups make the progress they should.
- Resources to help pupils learn are carefully prepared to match pupils' needs.
- Currently, there is a very strong focus to develop mathematics in the school. Pupils learn well because of the way they are challenged to use what they know in order to solve problems. In one lesson, pupils refreshed their memories about units of length, capacity, volume and time, for example, and then had to make predictions and explain the answers to a series of problems based on what they knew.
- Pupils are taught different methods of calculation clearly. Some, however, especially in Key Stage 2, are not able to recall multiplication and division facts quickly. This slows down the pace of their work so they make less progress than they might. Pupils do not always set their work out in a clear and logical fashion.
- Good learning in English is underpinned by clear and manageable expectations of what pupils will achieve in the lesson. Opportunities for discussion with adults and among themselves help pupils to understand new ideas and prepare the words they need for writing. This enabled Year 3 pupils, for example, to learn to recognise and write compound and complex sentences very quickly. Pupils generally write well in literacy books and develop writing skills at a good pace. Those skills, however, are not always evident in other subjects where, too often, writing is poorer in quality and work is less well presented.
- Adults check work in progress during lessons effectively. They question pupils well to assess their

understanding and provide good help and support for pupils' varying needs.

- Marking and feedback to pupils in literacy and numeracy books are good. Pupils are challenged to think about what they have done, are given time to do their corrections and improve quickly. The same rigour and expectations are not applied in other subjects where there is less challenge to pupils on how to improve on what they have done.

The achievement of pupils is good

- From below typical starting points for their age, pupils achieve well by the time they leave Year 6.
- The successful introduction of a new programme for teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they make) has boosted progress in Year 1 significantly. In 2014, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check was well above the national average.
- This has a positive knock-on effect in Year 2 where, currently, progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good and standards are rising quickly, especially for those on track to reach the higher level 3.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014 were lower than those usually seen at the school, but this was not unexpected. There were several reasons for this, including particular learning and other needs that were present within the Year 6 group. In addition, this situation was exacerbated by pupils joining the school at different stages throughout the key stage.
- Governors were aware of the significantly lower than typical starting points of the year group and anticipated a lower performance in national tests. Additional support was put in to boost achievement in Year 6. As a consequence, while attainment was below average, most of the pupils made the progress expected of them from their relative starting points. Many achieved at least an expected Level 4 in one or more subjects. Those who reached Level 3 at Key Stage 1 generally achieved Level 5 at the end of Year 6.
- Attainment in mathematics was particularly low and is now a focus for improvement in the school, along with development of pupils' writing skills across the curriculum.
- The picture over time shows that 2014 was not a typical year for the school. Over time, standards have been average and are on track to be average again this year with some pupils expected to reach the highest possible Level 6 in mathematics or writing. Pupils' work and school assessments confirm more rapid progress throughout all classes.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. In Year 2, pupils read regularly in school and at home with parents. They enjoy reading and talk about the good range of books they have at home. They use phonics skills well to work out unfamiliar words and have good understanding of what they read. In Year 6, pupils read fluently and with good expression. They read widely for pleasure and to find things out and know why it is important to be able to read well.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are very well provided for. They make good progress because of the careful planning and very effective support they receive, both for their learning and pastoral needs. Effective partnership working with parents and outside agencies is having a positive impact on the well-being of children with specific needs.
- The school provides well for the most able pupils. Extra classes provide additional support for pupils capable of reaching higher levels. Expectations are high and several pupils are on track to make better progress than expected and achieve the highest level.
- Assessment data for 2014 show that disadvantaged pupils did less well in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils nationally. The differences in attainment represent about four terms' progress in reading and mathematics, and about three terms' progress in writing. When compared with other pupils in the school, disadvantaged pupils were two terms behind in reading, one term behind in writing but around three terms behind in mathematics.
- Currently, however, school assessments show that better teaching is having a more positive effect and that disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to others in the school, with gaps narrowing quickly.

The early years provision is good

- Children's abilities on entry to Nursery vary from year to year but are generally below those typical for their age, especially in the important social skills of managing their feelings and behaviour, listening, and making relationships.
- By the end of Reception, children have made good progress. An above-average proportion reached a good

level of development in the past two years and a similar proportion is expected in the current year. Children are well prepared for their entry to Year 1.

- Children quickly adjust to routines of school life because of teachers' high expectations and the careful nurturing they receive. They learn to share with others and to explore their indoor and outdoor surroundings confidently. They develop the skills they need to work alongside others and learn to behave well.
- Children are safe and well cared for. Staff are very watchful over children's well-being without inhibiting their excitement and enthusiasm. For example, children were very keen to collect up hailstones during a storm and raced to get brushes and containers, but all under the watchful eye of supervising staff.
- Relationships with parents are strong. Parents have confidence in the early years staff and speak highly of the care shown towards them and their children.
- Children in Reception take pride in their work. They work confidently, showing good levels of independence. For example, two boys were particularly keen to show inspectors their writing, pointing out all of their capital letters, full stops and finger spaces.
- Leadership and management in the early years are good. Previous areas for improvement have been tackled successfully and a strong team has been established that plans for and assesses children's progress effectively. Pupils with special educational needs are identified quickly and their individual needs are well met. All staff feel well supported because of ample opportunities to work with other schools, for example, to improve their skills.

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	104452
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	456136

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	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Canon M Rogers
Headteacher	K Sawyer
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2012
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