

The Friars Primary School

Cannon Street, Salford, Greater Manchester, M3 7EU

Inspection dates

19–20 May 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.

- This is a happy and improving school. The highly nurturing and caring environment helps pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem.
- Skilled and determined leadership by the headteacher, senior leaders and governors have led to improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Staff share the headteacher's passion and drive for improvement and feel valued and supported. They are eager to strengthen their practice continuously. As a result, teaching is at least good and improving.
- The school provides many exciting and stimulating learning experiences. These promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have a very good understanding of British values. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain by the time they leave Year 6.
- Strong relationships exist with parents, the local community and partners.
- Governors provide effective challenge and support. They are fully committed to continuous improvement. They ensure the school meets the needs of the local community.
- Pupils' behaviour is at least good. Pupils are eager to learn and feel safe. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their good punctuality and broadly average and improving attendance.
- Pupils have extremely trusting relationships with staff, built on mutual respect. This creates a highly positive climate for learning.
- All groups of pupils are making good progress from their individual starting points.
- Provision in the early years is good and improving. Children achieve at least well from their different starting points.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few teachers do not always provide tasks that stretch pupils' abilities, particularly the most able in mathematics.
- Teachers' marking is not always used to help pupils improve their work.
- Pupils do not always have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical and writing skills in different subjects. This hinders their progress.
- Plans drawn up by leaders to improve teaching and achievement are not always specific enough in how their success will be measured.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in all classes across the school and in the resourced provision unit for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Inspectors listened to some pupils read.
- The inspectors looked closely at pupils' work in lessons, in books and on display around school. They also spoke often to pupils during the inspection and met with groups of pupils to discuss their views of school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. Inspectors met with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. They held discussions with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including the school's own view of its performance, plans for improvement and policies and procedures. Inspectors made very careful checks on records of the progress of pupils, their behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors also checked closely on the work of governors and a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through checking the 20 responses to the online Parent View survey and the 69 responses to the school's own recent survey of parental opinion. Inspectors also spoke to parents during the inspection.
- The inspectors took account of the views of staff expressed in the 23 responses to the voluntary inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Chris Maloney, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Alison Burbage

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The number of pupils attending The Friars is increasing. As a result, the school is now broadly similar in size to the average-sized primary school.
- Significant proportions of pupils join and leave the school other than at the normal times of transfer, particularly in classes in Key Stage 2.
- The school has specially resourced provision for up to ten pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- There have been significant changes in staffing since the last inspection, including the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic communities is much higher than average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is high compared to the national average. This additional government funding is provided for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Children attend the Nursery and Reception classes on a full-time basis.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school works in close partnership with local schools in the Irwell Education Improvement Partnership. Close links also exist with Salford School Sports Partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further in order to accelerate pupils' progress, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers consistently plan work that challenges the abilities of all pupils, particularly the most able in mathematics
 - teachers' marking consistently helps pupils to improve their work
 - pupils have more opportunities to use and extend their mathematical and writing skills across subjects.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - actions planned by leaders to improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils, are clear in how their impact will be measured.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, demonstrates a passionate determination and unrelenting drive for improvement. This resolute approach has been vital in successfully managing significant changes in staffing and long-term absence since the last inspection which has hindered the achievement of pupils in some year groups. As a result, past weaknesses in teaching and the achievement of pupils have been successfully addressed. The quality of teaching and achievement of pupils are improving strongly.
- The promotion of equal opportunities is good. All pupils are offered effective support and equal access to a rich and stimulating curriculum. Leaders are fully committed to helping all pupils reach their potential. Pupils in the specially resourced provision receive skilled support and are fully integrated in school life.
- Staff, including those new to school, share the commitment to making the school the best it can be. There is a strong team spirit and staff feel valued and supported.
- Senior leaders know the school well and what needs to improve further. Middle leaders share this drive for continuous improvement. However, it is not always clear how the actions of leaders to improve teaching and achievement will be reviewed and measured. This sometimes hinders leaders' ability to implement successfully the changes they wish to make.
- Senior leaders make regular checks on pupils' progress. Senior leaders have used the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils well. Additional staff, such as the Child and Families Officer, provide skilled support resulting in disadvantaged pupils progressing as well and sometimes better than others in the school.
- High numbers of pupils join the school throughout their primary education, particularly in Year 6. Senior leaders ensure that they make good progress from their different starting points.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving because nothing less than at least good teaching is acceptable to the leadership and management of the school. The quality of teaching is checked regularly and staff receive good guidance and training on how to improve. They have good opportunities to share their practice in school and in other schools.
- Pupils are provided with rich, stimulating and creative opportunities to learn. These are enhanced with visits, visitors and residential stays at venues away from school. Pupils have good opportunities to learn Spanish and attend a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs.
- Leaders ensure there is no discrimination. The strong promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development fosters highly positive relationships. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to explore citizenship and celebrate and appreciate differences in culture and traditions. Staff promote British values well, including tolerance and the rule of law. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Additional funding for physical education and sport is used well. Improved training for staff is aiding their confidence and competence. The employment of specialist coaches and involvement with Salford School Sports Partnership has led to increased participation in additional clubs and competitive sports, such as water polo and handball. Pupils' well-being and healthy lifestyles are improving.
- Strong links exist with parents. Although there were a few negative responses on Parent View, discussions with many parents during the inspection and the school's own surveys found no evidence to explain these. Parents say they feel welcomed and well supported. A typical parental comment was, 'I can't praise the school enough.'
- Close links with schools in the Irwell Education Improvement Partnership has led to joint working on improving teaching and learning. The school receives good support from the local authority in improving teaching and learning and staff employment.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Clear policies and procedures are in place. Checks by leaders and governors ensure these are effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors are well led and offer challenge and support to school leaders. They have managed staffing turbulence well along with the move to the new early years unit. They ensure they have the information they need to hold senior leaders to account and have helped to strengthen teaching and improve the achievement of pupils. They visit regularly and know the school well.
 - Governors have a good understanding of how data on the progress of pupils compares to others in the local authority and nationally. They ensure teachers' pay progression and pay rewards are linked to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Governors set targets for the performance of the headteacher and tackle any underperformance in teaching across school rigorously.
 - Governors keep a close eye on school finances and check that extra funding for physical education and

sport and for disadvantaged pupils is having the positive impact it should. Regular checks on safeguarding ensure that practice reflects the safeguarding policy. These checks ensure safeguarding arrangements effectively meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are eager to learn and they try their best. They typically say that, 'I like this school because all my friends are here and it helps you get on in life.' Pupils' positive attitudes to learning is aiding their improving progress. Punctuality is good and attendance is broadly average.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are sometimes outstanding. This is when work captures their interests and imagination and makes them think hard. However, a very few pupils lose interest, fidget and chat when tasks do not meet their learning needs. This hinders the progress they make.
- Pupils who access the specially resourced provision behave well and are eager to learn.
- Pupils are polite, welcoming and respectful to visitors. Pupils' highly positive and trusting relationships with staff help to boost their confidence in learning and self-esteem. They enjoy a wide range of clubs, including gardening, dance, drama and gymnastics. They also talk eagerly about the competitive sports they can join in, such as dodge ball and golf.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of responsibilities on offer, such as being a school buddy, helping other pupils at lunchtime or as a reporter for the school website.
- Pupils celebrate and appreciate cultural differences and another person's rights to hold different opinions and beliefs. Pupils typically say, 'It's okay to be different because everyone has that right.'

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves and others safe. They receive good support through assemblies, work in class and specially chosen visitors. This results in pupils' good awareness of potential dangers, such as those posed by strangers or when using the internet. A typical comment from pupils was, 'Don't give your personal information to anyone you don't know.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take, such as homophobic bullying, cyber bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They say that on the rare occasions when bullying happens it is always dealt with quickly and fairly by staff.
- Parents are confident their children feel safe and secure. This is reflected in their discussions with inspectors and the positive response to the online Parent View survey. In the school's own recent survey, 99% of the 69 responses from parents agreed their children feel safe.
- Robust systems are in place to ensure that pupils are safe and secure. Adults who work with pupils are rigorously vetted as being suitable to work with children.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is at least good and occasionally outstanding. Staff know pupils very well as individuals and have highly positive, trusting and mutually respectful relationships with them. These help boost pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. As a result, pupils' eagerness to learn and try their best is contributing strongly to their improving achievement.
- Teachers reinforce learning effectively and use their strong subject knowledge to question pupils' thinking and assess their understanding. They engage pupils well and stimulate their interests so that pupils can stay on task longer and have positive attitudes to their learning.
- Teachers regularly check on how well pupils are learning. They give pupils opportunities to assess their own learning and that of others in the class. Staff show that they support the drive for improvement by raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, a few teachers sometimes plan activities that are not pitched at the right level. Work is sometimes too easy or too hard. As a result, some pupils, particularly the most able, do not make enough progress.
- Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes. They use praise and rewards well to stimulate learning.
- Senior leaders have introduced a very useful policy that provides clear guidance on how teachers should

mark pupils' work in order to help them improve. Some teachers are following this policy closely and providing pupils with excellent guidance through marking on how to make their work better and then checking that they have done so. However, not all marking consistently reflects the school's marking policy. This hinders the progress of some pupils.

- Reading is taught well throughout school. Pupils are supported well in building a firm foundation in phonics (the sounds that letters make). The skilled and systematic teaching of reading continues through the school so that pupils gain confidence and build the skills they need to become successful readers. Pupils in danger of falling behind get the support they need from highly skilled teaching assistants.
- The whole-school focus on improving writing is paying dividends. Teachers are providing pupils with more stimulating opportunities to talk about and write about. An expectation on pupils to improve their work through re-drafting, for example, is a regular feature of lessons. However, pupils are not always encouraged to apply and improve their writing skills when working in other subjects. This is hindering their rate of progress in this subject.
- Pupils' basic mathematical skills are strengthened through regular revision and consolidation of skills. Pupils are encouraged to explain their reasoning and choice of strategies to use. This is helping pupils to improve their mastery of mathematical concepts. However, opportunities are missed for pupils to extend their mathematical skills by using them when working in other subjects across the curriculum.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The decisive actions by senior leaders have successfully eradicated the weaker progress seen in the past. As a result, all pupils currently in school, including children in the early years and those accessing the specially resourced provision, are making at least good progress from their starting points. Standards are rising, particularly in the early years and by the end of Year 2.
- Inspection evidence and the school's own data show that many pupils made good and sometimes outstanding progress last year from their starting points. This includes the significant numbers of pupils in Year 6 who have special educational needs and the significant numbers of pupils who joined this year group since Year 2. However, this good progress was not consistent across all classes and groups of pupils. Although there is still a little variability, the progress of current pupils in all classes is good.
- The proportion of pupils exceeding the progress expected of them has increased from last year. More pupils are now working at the higher levels of attainment in writing, mathematics and reading, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6 than was the case last year.
- Pupils are doing well in their accurate use of punctuation, grammar and choice of vocabulary.
- Achievement in reading is improving strongly. This is because there is a systematic approach to teaching reading throughout the school delivered by skilled staff. In addition, knowledgeable support is given to those pupils who underachieve.
- In 2014, the results in the Year 1 national screening check in reading were above the national average. This reflects pupils' increasing confidence in identifying the sounds that letters make. Pupils make good progress and develop a love of reading as they move through school. Pupils talk animatedly about their favourite books and authors.
- Pupils show enjoyment in mathematics and demonstrate improving basic skills. Their mastery of mathematical concepts is good and becoming more secure than in the past. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their work and decide on the most efficient strategies to use to solve problems is a helpful feature in lessons.
- The most-able pupils are usually given harder work that deepens their understanding and stretches their thinking and abilities. As a result, the progress of the most-able pupils is improving. However, the challenge given to the most able is not consistent across school, especially in mathematics and so some do not reach their potential.
- Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs are identified early so that they receive well-targeted additional support from highly skilled and caring teaching assistants. This support ensures their needs are met very effectively so that they make good and sometimes outstanding progress. The high number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress due to the skilled support they receive.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was one and a half terms behind other pupils in the school in reading and two terms behind in both writing and mathematics. Compared to other pupils nationally, pupils were four terms behind in reading, three terms behind in writing and four and a half terms behind in mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils was broadly in line with other pupils nationally in writing, but slower in reading and mathematics.

- Inspection evidence shows that the gaps in attainment between current disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are narrowing rapidly. These pupils are now achieving as well as and sometimes better than others in their class.

The early years provision

is good

- When children start in the Nursery class, only one in ten of them have the skills typical for their age. Particular weaknesses are evident in children's language and communication skills and personal development. However, all children, including the most able and those with special educational needs make at least good, and sometimes outstanding, progress from their individual starting points.
- Children's attainment by the end of Reception is rising and in 2014 the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was well above the national average. An even larger proportion of children in the Reception classes this year are currently displaying a good level of development. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Children settle quickly due to the highly nurturing environment, caring staff, well-established routines and strong links with parents. Staff know every child and their parents well. These strong links enable parents to support their children's learning well through induction evenings, daily meetings, attendance at workshops such as for phonics and mathematics. They also regularly inform staff of children's achievements at home. Consequently, staff pitch learning at the right level of difficulty for each child.
- Consistently good teaching ensures children have a good range of exciting and meaningful learning activities led by adults or tasks chosen by children themselves. Children's progress is skilfully and regularly checked and the next steps in their learning identified to stretch children's different abilities. Staff quickly identify those children needing extra help and provide highly effective support.
- Areas of learning are organised so that children can follow their interests and access resources independently. The outdoor area promotes curiosity and children's physical skills well, such as negotiating obstacles, balancing, climbing safely or experimenting with the outdoor waterfall.
- Children are eager to learn and behave well. They listen carefully, take turns and respond well to adults. They know how to stay safe.
- The development of children's writing skills is well promoted. Children enjoy fun activities to develop their pencil grip. They quickly learn to write their names, label pictures and write sentences.
- Skilled teaching of the sounds individual and combinations of letters make helps children to make good progress in their reading. They learn to identify these accurately in the words or sentences they read or write.
- Children's mathematical skills are promoted well. Staff eagerly reinforce children's ability to count forwards and backwards. The most-able children show they can count in twos and fives. Children also recognise different shapes or work out simple number problems.
- Children have good opportunities to explore their learning during a wide range of visits, such as to local shops, the park or the local church. This stimulates their interest and curiosity in their local area and the world around them.
- The quality of leadership and management in the early years is good. The leader has a clear understanding of what is going well and how to make further improvements to their exciting new setting. Children's achievement is good and improving, and staff are fully supportive of the vision for improvement.
- Robust risk assessments keep children safe. Regular checks keep safeguarding policies and practice under review. These ensure that safeguarding effectively meets requirements.

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	105896
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	461703

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Burke
Headteacher	Patricia Arnold
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2011
Telephone number	0161 832 4664
Fax number	0161 835 2915
Email address	thefriars.primary@salford.gov.uk

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