

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Whalley Road, Langho, Blackburn, Lancashire BB6 8EQ

Inspection dates	8–9 December 2015
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher and other senior leaders provide ambitious and determined leadership which has resulted in significant improvements in teaching and pupils' outcomes since the last inspection.
- Governors have steered the school through a turbulent period. They have put the children first and foremost in their drive to improve the school. This has been pivotal in moving the school forward.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving rapidly. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning spills over. Pupils say that they find lessons fun and exciting.
- The well-designed curriculum provides pupils with experiences which engage and enthuse them and enable them to make links across the different subjects.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. Pupils are kind and considerate. Older pupils take good care of younger children and treat their peers with respect. Pupils are happy, enjoy coming to school and are safe. Pupils' behaviour and attendance are good.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. As pupils move into Key Stage 1 they continue to secure their basic skills.
- In Years 5 and 6, pupils' learning accelerates and the proportion of pupils making more than the expected progress by the end of Key Stage 2 is rapidly increasing.
- All groups of pupils, including disadvantaged and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress across school from their different starting points.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet of a consistently high standard across all classes to ensure that pupils, including the most able, make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- A small number of teaching assistants currently lack sufficient skills and strategies to fully support pupils' learning effectively.
- Middle leaders are not confident in using assessment information to have an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the areas they lead or to measure the impact of their actions.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement, by:
 - ensuring that in all classes teachers plan lessons effectively, making maximum use of lesson time so that all pupils, including the most able, rapidly improve their knowledge, skills and understanding in English and mathematics
 - making good use of the existing outstanding practice to improve the quality of teaching across school.
- Further improve the impact of support staff, including those in the early years, on outcomes for pupils, by:
 - providing the appropriate training to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to contribute strongly to the good progress of pupils
 - making certain that teachers deploy support staff effectively in lessons.
- Extend the skills of middle leaders to develop their confidence in using assessment information to secure a well-informed understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the areas they lead and measure the impact of their actions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since taking up her post, the headteacher has been resolute and aspirational in her leadership and has brought about a seismic shift in the culture and ethos of the school. She is ably supported by the recently appointed deputy headteacher. In partnership with the effective governing body they have very clearly set the direction of travel for the school and left no one in any doubt that only the best will do.
- Senior leaders have their 'fingers on the pulse'; they know precisely the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have wasted no time in addressing the latter. They have set out their improvement plans and are meticulously measuring the impact of everything they have put in place. They have ensured that everyone is on board and shares their ambition.
- Middle leaders are flourishing. They are relishing their new-found responsibilities and playing a key role in accelerating improvements for pupils across the school. They have observed lessons, carried out work scrutinies and moderated assessments. As a result, they are able to provide targeted support to their colleagues which is directly impacting on outcomes for pupils. The teacher responsible for able, gifted and talented (AGT) provision has ensured that there are effective systems in place to identify pupils. She has put in place a wide range of provision to ensure those pupils flourish. Pupils have benefited from visits by authors and artists as well as access to science and sports facilities at a local secondary school. However, middle leaders are not yet confident in using assessment information to ensure that they have a precise understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the areas they lead and measure the impact of their actions.
- The well-designed curriculum provides pupils with learning experiences which engage and enthuse them and enable them to make links across the different subjects. Pupils' books show evidence of purposeful writing and examples of mathematics skills and knowledge being developed through science and geography. In religious education, Year 6 pupils wrote a play based on the visitation of the angel to the shepherds using the organisational and presentational devices they had learned in English to structure their writing. The curriculum is enriched by the wealth of after-school and lunchtime clubs including French, chess and cookery. The headteacher has ensured that trips and visits are carefully considered and add value to the curriculum. For example, the early years children recently visited the post office to send their letters to Father Christmas. Also, a visit by a soldier helped pupils understand the impact of the world wars on people's lives and the reasons why we mark Remembrance Day. However, there are missed opportunities for the curriculum to provide further challenge, particularly for the most-able pupils, both in the early years and across the school.
- British values are strongly embedded in the curriculum. For example, Year 6 pupils are to visit the Houses of Parliament in February as part of their learning about democracy. Learning about different faiths and cultures helps pupils to understand the diversity of the world in which they live and the importance of mutual tolerance and respect.
- Sports and physical education funding is used wisely by school leaders. Leaders have used the funding to widen the offer of sporting activities and encourage the participation of all pupils. The school now takes several teams to competitions to allow more pupils to have the chance to represent the school. The school buys in specialist coaching for netball, in which pupils excel. Last year the school team not only won the Ribble Valley netball competition but also the regional championship. Year 3 pupils were looking forward to taking part in a Santa Run at Accrington Academy shortly after inspectors visited.
- Pupil premium funding is used very well to support disadvantaged pupils. (The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or are looked after by the local authority.) Most of these pupils are at or above the expected level for their ages. Carefully targeted interventions have been put in place for those pupils who have fallen behind – ensuring they catch up quickly. A number of these pupils have been identified as able, gifted and talented and their needs are being addressed by the AGT lead. Teachers are charged with ensuring that disadvantaged pupils in their class access a range of before- and after-school activities. Year 6 librarians run a successful lunchtime club to provide more reading opportunities for younger pupils.
- All staff are thriving under the new leadership. One member of staff said that she loves to come to work now. They are impressed with the headteacher's knack for perfectly matching the support and training to the individual. A recent visit to an outstanding local school provided teachers with the opportunity to compare notes with parallel year teachers, ensuring that their assessments of pupils' writing are more consistent. Teachers are enthused by the range of training and support they have been given and there is

clear evidence of its positive impact on their classroom practice and subject leadership.

■ **The governance of the school**

- Governors, by their own admission, have taken off their rose-tinted spectacles following the previous inspection. They have a well-informed view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their frequent visits to school and hands-on approach enables them to keep a watchful eye on the actions being put in place by senior leaders to ensure that these are improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Governors are determined that their school will be the school of choice for the local community and that every pupil will achieve their full potential. They have put the best interests of the pupils at the heart of all their decision making. They have ensured that they have the skills and knowledge to provide effective challenge and support. Governors have a firm grasp on the finances. They ensure that funding is used to good effect such as in the recent improvements to the early years environment and the investment in high-quality reading books. When staff performance is not improving quickly enough they do not shy away from taking decisive action and all pay recommendations are closely scrutinised.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures to check the background of adults to ensure they are cleared to work with children are up to date. All staff have recently attended child protection training. Pupils are extremely well-cared-for and additional help and support is directed to those who need it.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Teachers use what they know about the pupils to plan work which is interesting, fun and challenging.
- The headteacher very quickly got to grips with what needed to be put in place to improve outcomes for pupils. Staff, governors and parents all cite the impact of the 'structure' that she has put into the school as making a positive difference. She ensures that no time is wasted through her well-considered timetabling. Pupils get off to a flying start every morning with phonics (the sounds that letters make) sessions for the younger pupils and grammar, punctuation and spelling for the older ones. Pupils are effectively transferring their learning from these sessions back into the classroom.
- Senior leaders have tailored training and support for teaching staff to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to make the improvements which governors and senior leaders expect. Teachers have a secure understanding of the year groups they work with and are able to use questioning skilfully to reshape tasks, ensuring that they are constantly challenging pupils. However, teaching staff do not give pupils enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and allow them to learn from their mistakes.
- There has been a stark improvement in the teaching of mathematics. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils were challenged to tell the story of Archimedes in the bath by interpreting the data on the line graph. Once pupils had solved this problem, the teacher presented them with a line graph of a lorry driver's journey which really tested how successfully they were able to apply their learning. The pupils enjoyed sharing their ideas and explaining their reasoning.
- Pupils are delighted by the new reading books, both online and hard copies, which have been purchased. Year 3 pupils talked enthusiastically about the class novel they were reading. They explained that it would not have been a book they would have chosen themselves but they were keen to read more by the same author. This exposure to high-quality texts is impacting on pupils' writing as they are using more adventurous vocabulary and increasing fluency. One pupil composed a poem titled 'Winter' using personification in response to a text in a reading lesson which opened 'I'm bitter hearted'.
- Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is a strength of the school. Pupils are passionate about their learning. They soak up the knowledge which their teachers impart and enjoy grappling with the challenges they are given. Teachers know their pupils well and not a moment is wasted in lessons. They make sure most-able pupils are stimulated and challenged at every turn. 'Rapid graspers' (pupils who quickly grasp and understand new learning) are quickly moved on and those pupils who need help to keep up with their classmates are not kept waiting. Pupils' work is a testament to these high standards.
- Pupils' learning in Years 3 and 4 does not always move forward quickly enough. This is because questioning and explanations do not always engage pupils in all parts of the lesson, and the use of time is sometimes ineffective. Sometimes the work set for pupils is not challenging enough. Consequently, pupils do not always make the good progress of which they are capable.
- The headteacher's forensic analysis of the progress and attainment of cohorts, groups and individual pupils

has enabled her to ensure that every gap in pupils' learning has been exposed and a plan put in place to ensure that these are plugged and that learning does not falter. This approach ensures that the legacy of underperformance is being eradicated. The carefully considered approach to termly assessment gives senior leaders confidence in the reliability of assessment information and ensures that any trends of underperformance are nipped in the bud.

- Teaching assistants work in partnership with teachers to support pupils' learning. The phonics knowledge of staff working with the younger children contributes well to the good progress pupils make in reading. Similar good support was seen in a mathematics lesson when skilful questioning helped most-able pupils to quickly grasp conversion between analogue and digital time. However, a small number of teaching assistants currently lack the skills and strategies to fully support pupils' learning effectively. For example, they are not checking pupils work closely enough to pick up on errors or misconceptions before moving pupils on to the next task.
- The marking and feedback policy is being used to great effect in most classes. Recent improvements to the marking policy are clearly evidenced in the improvement in pupils' work in their books.
- Parents speak positively about the homework set. They value the sessions school has offered to help them support their children's learning, for example sessions in calculation and in reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are proud of their school, wearing their uniform with pride.
- The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is exemplary and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. There is a well-developed model of pupil chaplaincy. This group helps pupils to understand their faith, the power of prayer and to live by the Christian values. They have developed a prayer space and encourage other pupils to make use of this.
- School leaders and pupils actively promote healthy lifestyles. The salad bar servers remind everyone of the importance of a balanced diet, the headteacher encourages pupils of all ages and abilities to join her lunchtime running club and pupils know who to talk to if they have any worries.
- High value is placed on pupils' emotional well-being. Pupils value the provision of the learning mentor who they can talk to if they have any worries. A number of pupils benefit from initiatives such as 'What's the Buzz?' a workshop to share problems, and 'Sussing out your Secondary School' for those Year 6 pupils who are anxious about transition. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils' confidence and self-esteem are developed during their time at St Mary's.
- Pupils are happy, they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Following a visit from a representative of ChildLine, pupils have memorised the contact number. Pupils are adamant that bullying and racist incidents rarely happen and are confident that if they did they would be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. The Christian values which thread through St Mary's promote a culture of respect and tolerance. Pupils listen to each other's ideas, treat everyone with respect and value each other's differences. They take care of each other. The older pupils look after the younger children – helping them to settle in quickly.
- Parents feel welcome in school, value the regular communication and the information they receive about their children's progress and appreciate the professional way in which all staff deal with any concerns that they have.
- There are countless examples of pupils' acts of kindness. Learning that one in five children do not receive any Christmas presents, pupils made donations of wrapped gifts to the local community. They have raised funds to buy two boats for a village in Africa which they have learned about through visits to school by the village priest. At the Christmas fair one pupil won a chocolate bar which he then put in the tray of another pupil who had been very ill, to cheer him up. The choir were looking forward to carol singing for a community group at the local church.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils talk about the positive change in behaviour since the new headteacher joined the school. Pupils are polite and courteous. Pupils hold doors open for adults and one another and move around school in an orderly fashion. They listen carefully to their teachers and are respectful towards other adults in school. Pupils' behaviour in most lessons is exemplary. However,

occasionally, in lessons where teaching does not engage all pupils in all parts of the lesson and the use of time is ineffective, a small minority of pupils do become distracted and resort to fidgeting and chattering. As a result, their learning does not move forward quickly enough.

- Pupils are becoming increasingly self-confident and self-assured. They enjoy talking about their work and are immensely proud of their achievements. Many pupils said how much they enjoy their homework tasks because they are fun.
- Pupils' attendance is good and continues to improve as a result of a rigorous approach to following up every absence. Senior leaders keep a watchful eye on the attendance of all pupils, particularly those who are more vulnerable, and they take appropriate action as necessary.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Senior leaders have quickly put in place a range of actions which are ensuring that all groups of pupils are making accelerated progress across the curriculum.
- Children join the early years with skills and knowledge typical for their age. Good progress in Reception ensures that they join Key Stage 1 well prepared for the demands of the National Curriculum. Pupils have settled quickly in Year 1 and the vast majority are on track to meet age-related expectations in the phonics screening check this year. Additional support for those pupils who did not meet the expected standard last year is helping them to catch up quickly.
- The introduction of high-quality reading material combined with well-taught reading lessons is reversing the tide of poor reading outcomes. Pupils are enthused by the new books and are able to read with accuracy and fluency appropriate to their age. Younger pupils are able to use their phonics knowledge well to read unfamiliar words, identify the features of texts and predict outcomes. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are able to compare characters, identify themes and talk with real enthusiasm about their favourite authors.
- Leaders are determined to eradicate the gaps in pupils' knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling and the daily lessons are certainly making a positive difference. Pupils' books clearly evidence how they are applying their learning from these lessons to their writing. Leaders' insistence that teachers give pupils more opportunities to write at length not only in English but across the curriculum is helping them to develop their effectiveness as writers. By the time pupils reach Year 5 and 6 their writing is becoming fluent and effortless.
- The focus on mathematics is paying dividends. As a result of the introduction of a new curriculum, underpinned by high-quality training and support, the quality of teaching has improved significantly and standards are rapidly improving. Accurate assessments ensure that teachers build on prior learning to plan well-judged lessons which ensure that pupils are becoming increasingly fluent in using number and are adept at solving problems. The transformation in mathematics is best captured by the pupils who say that mathematics lessons are now fun and exciting.
- The carefully targeted support for pupils who have fallen behind combined with the improvements in the quality of teaching has ensured that the legacy of underperformance for summer born, boys and most-able pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 is now eradicated. Across school, pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their individual starting points. The recent audit of provision for these pupils by the special needs coordinator and link governor is helping the school to ensure these pupils' needs continue to be well met.
- The proportion of most-able pupils who are making accelerated progress to reach higher levels of attainment is increasing. The intensive focus on these pupils led by the able, gifted and talented lead ensures that these pupils are accurately identified and teachers are given advice and guidance to provide them with tasks that are well matched to their needs and abilities.
- From their different starting points, pupils who are disadvantaged make good progress which is similar to and sometimes better than their peers. Well-thought-out, carefully tailored provision for these pupils ensures that their needs are well met. As a result, any gaps between these pupils and their peers are closing across school.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make steady progress. However, improvements are needed if these pupils are to make the rapid progress which is a feature of the rest of the school.

Early years provision

is good

- The leadership and management of the early years are good. The early years leader has a good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class because staff have high expectations of what children are capable of achieving and ensure that they benefit from exciting and memorable experiences. However, support staff are reliant on the early years leader and further training and support is imperative to ensure that all adults in the setting have the skills and knowledge to maintain high expectations at all times.
- Children join St Mary's from a range of settings. Leaders ensure they very quickly grasp a secure baseline of children's starting points on entry to ensure that activities in all areas are purposeful and engaging and move children's learning forward quickly. Children are involved in assessing their progress; children enjoy moving their alien along the rocket as they achieve each of their targets. As they achieve each target a 'Wow Star' is sent home to inform parents. Most-able children were able to talk about the challenges they are set in literacy and mathematics. However, the bar needs to be raised for these challenges if these most-able children are going to achieve their full potential.
- Staff use home/school books well so that parents can engage in a dialogue around their children's learning. They have recently put on a session to inform parents about how phonics is taught which was very well attended
- Decisive action to tackle underperformance in literacy and mathematics has ensured that from their broadly typical starting points children make good progress. An above average proportion of children leave the early years at a good level of development, well prepared for the demands of Year 1. The improvements to the learning environment as well as changes to the way basic skills and phonics are taught have added to children's enjoyment and the pace of learning. Boys have benefitted in particular and have now caught up with girls in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders also use the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils well and as a result disadvantaged children make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teaching is good. Activities are planned which capture children's interests and promote opportunities for developing their skills across a range of learning. For example, children were puzzled by the disappearance of Mary and the baby Jesus from the nativity scene. This generated lots of discussion about what might have happened and where they could be. Children were keen to design posters to ask for their safe return. The early years team have made significant improvements to the environment to promote children's learning. In the outdoor area there are now lots of opportunities for children to develop their mathematical knowledge. Inspectors saw two children working together counting beads. They were able to say that there were 100 beads as they worked out that ten lots of ten beads would make 100.
- Children behave well, move around school sensibly and respond quickly to adult instructions. Children are keen to earn 'dojos' for modelling key learning characteristics such as perseverance, collaboration and listening.
- Safeguarding is effective. The vigilant staff ensure children are safe and well-cared-for. Statutory welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	119642
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10002236

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Angela Corban
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Stevens
Telephone number	01254 247157
Website	www.stmaryslangho.co.uk
Email address	head@st-marys-langho.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 November 2013

Information about this school

- There have been changes to the leadership since the last inspection, including the appointment of a headteacher and deputy headteacher in September 2015. There have also been considerable changes to the teaching staff since the last inspection.
- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are taught in eight classes from Reception to Year 6.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching across the school. One lesson was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning, assessment information and reports on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime and lunchtime. They also met formally with two small groups of pupils to chat about their learning and behaviour and safety. They also took account of the 28 responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for pupils and the school's own recent surveys.
- Inspectors listened to a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school and the work in the outdoor areas.
- A range of pupils' books were checked jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents during the inspection. They also took account of the 42 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school's own parent questionnaire. Inspectors also took note of the eight responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector

Catherine Margaret Parker

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

