

Ribchester St Wilfrid's Church of England Primary School

Church Street, Ribchester, Lancashire PR3 3XP

Inspection dates

4–5 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils make uneven progress as they move throughout school. They have an uphill struggle to make up for lost ground by the time they reach Year 5.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is a weakness from Reception to the end of Year 4. Pupils have too few opportunities to write. Their success is marred by poor handwriting and presentation skills.
- Pupils are not given the chance to put their mathematical skills to good use by solving a wider range of problems.
- Teachers do not take enough account of what pupils already know and can do when they plan lessons.
- The teaching of grammar and punctuation is weak. This means pupils do not have the tools to write accurately.
- A culture of low expectations means leaders do not set high standards for teachers. In turn, teachers do not demand enough from pupils.
- Governors have too generous a view of the school. They are content to accept information from the headteacher without asking probing questions about pupils' achievement or teaching.
- The checks on teaching happen too infrequently and are not followed up quickly enough to ensure change for the better takes place. The weaknesses in pupils' writing have been allowed to go on unchecked for too long.
- Teaching in the early years does not help children to make greater gains in their learning, particularly in writing. The activities that children choose for themselves lack purpose and challenge.

The school has the following strengths

- In every class pupils make strong progress in reading. The teaching of letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) prepares pupils well to read and spell.
- Pupils make swift progress in Years 5 and 6 so they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils thrive socially and emotionally due to the care they receive. Pupils behave well, feel safe and enjoy their time at school.
- Recent changes are leading to improvements in teaching, particularly in mathematics. The building blocks for future success are in place.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from Reception to Year 4 by:
 - lifting teachers' expectations of what pupils should and can do for their age and starting points
 - ensuring teachers take greater account of what pupils already know and can do when they plan lessons
 - making sure teachers insist on high standards of presentation which reflect pupils' pride in their work
 - reviewing the child-led activities in Reception so they offer greater challenge.

- Improve pupils' achievement across all classes, particularly in writing, by:
 - making sure pupils have greater opportunities to write in English lessons and across other subjects
 - helping pupils to develop fluent and legible handwriting styles
 - ensuring the teaching of grammar and punctuation is taught systematically so that pupils gain the technical skills they need to succeed as writers
 - providing greater opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills and understanding by solving a wider range of problems.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - reviewing roles so the responsibility for improving teaching is spread more evenly
 - keeping a much closer check on teaching and learning and making sure any agreed improvements are acted upon swiftly
 - ensuring the governing body gain an accurate view of the school so they are in a stronger position to champion the achievement of all pupils.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The considerable turmoil in staffing in recent years goes a long way to explaining why the standard of education at St Wilfrid's is no longer good. Prolonged staff leave in such a small school means the responsibility for improving teaching is unequally distributed. The headteacher carries a very heavy load.
- The headteacher has been very successful in keeping the school afloat during a challenging period in the school's history. The day-to-day management is smooth, staff morale is high and pupils are happy, well cared for and safe. None of the positive features which make St Wilfrid's a special place to pupils and parents have faltered. The school remains very much at the heart of the community. Nevertheless, standards have slipped because no one has paid enough attention to the core business of improving teaching. Low expectations have crept in because there is too much reliance on pupils catching up in their final two years at the school.
- The checks on teaching do not go far enough in picking up weaknesses and setting clear targets to help teachers improve. Leaders do not go back to check that their advice is being taken on board. Change for the better does not happen quickly enough. Records show that leaders raised concerns about the presentation of work in pupils' books this time last year, yet this continues to be a weakness in almost every class. Leaders do not check on pupils' learning sharply enough. Although information on pupils' progress is diligently collected, the findings are not checked against pupils' books to make sure the information is accurate or to gauge the quality of pupils' learning over time.
- Despite these shortcomings, there are early signs of improvements. Staff turbulence is beginning to settle and middle leaders are taking greater ownership for their areas of responsibility. The priorities for improvement are accurate and the plans to bring about change are setting the school on the right track. Weaker teaching is being tackled and the headteacher has the support and trust of a loyal staff who are willing to follow her lead. Pupils' gains in reading and the improving picture in mathematics point to leaders' ability to erode weaknesses and raise pupils' achievement. As a result, there is sufficient capacity to restore a good standard of education at the school.
- The early years leader and the subject lead for mathematics both have a clear understanding of what needs to happen to improve teaching. Early signs of the positive impact of their work are starting to emerge. Recent changes to mathematics teaching, supported by quality training, mean pupils are making steadier progress in this subject.
- Teachers are benefiting from appropriate opportunities to watch each other teach and to visit local schools to share expertise. As staffing settles, this is beginning to have a positive influence on the teaching of mathematics. It has had less of an impact on teachers' skills in teaching writing. Teachers who are new to the school are supported well to make a positive start to their career.
- The systems to manage the performance of teachers are well established and are a good tool to raise the quality of teaching. The targets set for teachers link well to the whole-school priorities for improvement. This is helping to make sure everyone has a part to play in raising pupils' achievement. The comings and goings of staff in recent times mean these systems have not had the chance to make greater inroads in tackling shortcomings in teaching.
- Leaders have the support of parents. The parents who shared their views are overwhelmingly positive about the school and have few concerns. All would recommend the school to other parents.
- The curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of pupils working within mixed-age classes. Subjects other than English and mathematics are thoughtfully linked together to capture pupils' interests and give their learning purpose. Good use is made of the resources on the school's doorstep. For example, pupils are able to develop their fieldwork skills in geography by studying the river that flows at the foot of the school. They are gaining a good sense of history and the importance of artefacts through the opportunities to take part in archaeological digs at the nearby Roman Museum.
- Leaders use expertise within the school well to ensure pupils have a broad and enjoyable experience at St Wilfrid's. Pupils flourish as artists due to the strong focus on developing their artistic skills and techniques. Extra-curricular activities and outdoor visits enhance pupils' experiences and make their time at St Wilfrid's memorable.
- Sport premium funding is used well to develop teachers' skills in delivering physical education lessons. The use of external coaches means pupils have greater opportunities to try out physical activity beyond the usual ball games. Pupils recently gained a taste of playing lacrosse; older pupils are preparing for a hockey tournament and pupils' enthusiasm for street dancing has led many to take part in this activity after school.

- Pupil premium funding is used appropriately to provide extra support for the small number of disadvantaged pupils who may lag behind their peers. This is helping disadvantaged pupils to keep pace with their peers and ensures they benefit from school as much as their classmates.
- A whole-school approach on values such as peace and justice equips pupils well to become valuable members of society. Their studies on different religions mean they are willing to accept and celebrate diversity. Leaders enjoy great success in their quest to nurture well-rounded youngsters who gain an appreciation of music, art, and diversity within their community and beyond. This means pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are passionate about the school. They give their time and support generously, visiting frequently, listening to pupils read and supporting with school visits and events. As a result, they have an accurate and well-informed view of the school's strengths in nurturing pupils' well-being.
 - However, their understanding of pupils' academic gains does not follow suit. They are too content to accept what they are told. They are taking the high standards pupils typically reach by the end of Year 6 as a measure of success, without finding out how pupils across the whole school are faring. As a result, their views of teaching and pupils' achievement are too generous.
 - Governors ensure they fulfil their statutory duties, including all of the requirements related to safeguarding. They know how the pupil premium funding is spent, but they are not routinely checking the difference this is making to pupils' outcomes. They ensure all legal requirements regarding teachers' appraisal are in place.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Keeping pupils safe and secure is a top priority, which means leaders keep abreast of government guidance and make sure all requirements are met in full. Regular training means staff are well equipped to spot and report any concerns about pupils' well-being. Detailed record keeping shows leaders follow up any worries tenaciously until they are satisfied pupils are no longer at risk of harm. Leaders seek and act on advice, using the strong partnerships with local authority officers and other external agencies to support pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is too varied between classes and subjects. In particular, the teaching of writing is a consistent weakness from Reception to the end of Year 4. Teachers provide too few opportunities for pupils to write. Teachers do not insist on high standards of presentation and they are not helping pupils to develop the necessary skills to write in a fluent and legible style. There are major shortcomings in how the mechanics of writing are taught. No systematic approach to developing pupils' grammar and punctuation skills is in place. Teachers do not pay enough attention to the National Curriculum requirements to make sure pupils are developing the same writing skills as other pupils their age in schools across the country.
- Teachers do not demand enough from pupils because they are not alert to what pupils already know and can do when they plan their lessons. Teachers are not expecting pupils to work hard enough for their age, starting points and abilities. Poor-quality work that is well below par is accepted and often celebrated as the best pupils can do.
- In stark contrast, the teaching of reading is much stronger across all year groups. Classrooms are full of quality texts which ignite pupils' interests in books. Sessions to teach reading are shaped well so that pupils can read for meaning and enjoyment.
- A whole-school approach to teaching calculations is leading to improvements in the level of teachers' expectations of pupils' mathematical skills. The teaching of other subjects has some highs and lows. Typically, it ensures pupils cover sufficient ground because teachers stick to the agreed whole-school plans.
- As staffing settles, teaching is beginning to improve. New teachers are bringing fresh ideas and making inroads into historic weaknesses in pupils' progress. No one is refusing to play their part and all are willing to bring about change because teachers have the pupils' best interests at heart. Weaker teaching in the past has led to some bad habits taking hold and becoming the norm. However, everyone is beginning to set their sights higher and take criticism on board. Before the inspection finished, action was already underway in every classroom to raise the standard of presentation in pupils' books.
- Without exception, teachers are highly skilled in fostering pupils' positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. Classrooms are warm and friendly. Pupils are willing to answer questions and to have a go at their work because they feel well supported by adults. No one stands in fear of getting muddled because staff are gentle, patient and willing to help out when pupils become stuck. Teachers go the extra mile to

capture pupils' interest and make learning fun. For example, pupils in Year 3 and 4 buzzed with excitement about the contribution they were making to a local issue by writing persuasive letters to the local authority. Teaching assistants make a positive difference to pupils' learning through the support they give and the questions they ask.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils grow into confident, articulate and valuable members of the school community because they are treated with the utmost respect by adults. Pupils love their school and take their many responsibilities seriously. Pride shines out of their eyes as they talk about all of the positive steps adults take to ensure they are safe and happy. They are treated equally, which means all have a chance to express their views and to celebrate their success. This work goes a long way in promoting pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Nonetheless, pupils are not able to show the same pride in their work because they are not being asked to reach high standards of presentation.
- Pupils are gaining the skills to make the right choices as they grow older, so they know the dangers associated with unhealthy lifestyles. They are becoming passionate advocates for safeguarding the environment. They know the positive steps they can take to look after their surroundings.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe outside of school. They have a good understanding of how to minimise risk when they use computers and mobile phones. They talk enthusiastically about their visit to 'Safety Town'. This initiative allows pupils to find out about keeping safe from a wide range of experts, such as the police and firefighters. Good links with a national charity ensure pupils can keep themselves safe from unwanted adult attention and abuse.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils at St Wilfrid's share many positive traits. They behave well, show respect to all adults and genuinely care about each other. Differences are never viewed as a reason to taunt or tease one another. In fact, they accept each other without question, so pupils of different ages and academic ability feel safe and free from name-calling. Respect and tolerance is the order of the day at this friendly and harmonious school. Everyone has an equal chance to flourish socially and emotionally.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Behaviour hardly falters during the school day. Learning is not usually disrupted by poor behaviour and pupils are not held back through a fear of standing out among the crowd. This was clearly evident during the class assembly which took place during the inspection. Younger pupils confidently performed to their parents and all of their schoolmates because they knew everyone was there to cheer them on. The behaviour of other pupils did not slip once. All pupils, even the youngest children, sat in rapt concentration. Their delight in celebrating the success of their friends was there for all to see in their smiling faces.
- School records indicate bullying is an exceptional occurrence. Pupils agree that bullying is not something they worry about. They point to the occasional falling out between friendship groups but all are confident adults listen carefully and take the right action to sort out any problems. All of the parents who shared their views agree that pupils are safe, behaviour is good and bullying is dealt with effectively.
- Pupils' attendance rates are a strength of the school. Attendance is above average for all groups and very few pupils miss large chunks of time away from their lessons.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- Until recently, standards by the end of Year 6 have outstripped the national average. They took a turn for the worse in 2015 and fell to match the national picture. Staff turbulence had a part to play in this dip, which saw pupils making less than expected progress in reading and mathematics. The outcomes at the end of 2015 are uncharacteristic. School information and pupils' books show the current Year 6 are set to make the progress that they should and meet the standards expected for their age.
- This one-off drop in pupils' achievement is not the main reason pupils' outcomes require improvement. Pupils' outcomes are not good because their progress is too uneven across the school. Their achievement in writing is weak. The positive picture by the end of Year 6 in recent years masks considerable underachievement elsewhere in the school. Pupils' books and the information the school holds on pupils'

progress show that too many tread water from their average starting points. In some cases, particularly in Years 3 and 4, pupils fall backwards.

- Year after year pupils face an uphill battle when they enter Year 5. From this point on there is a sea-change in their achievement. Stronger teaching and higher expectations mean they are able to recover lost ground quickly so they are not disadvantaged by the time they move into their secondary school.
- Pupils are not helped to become successful writers. They are not developing the stamina to write for sustained periods of time or the skills to write with flair across a range of different writing styles. Pupils do not have an age-appropriate body of knowledge about punctuation and grammar rules. This hampers their success considerably. Pupils' use of capital letters to denote sentences and identify proper nouns is sporadic. Few pupils consistently use more complex punctuation such as commas and speech marks until they enter Year 5. As a result, the quality of their writing does not always meet the levels expected for their age.
- Pupils are making expected gains in other subjects such as geography, history and science. However, the shortcomings in their writing skills prevents some pupils from communicating their learning as well as they should.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is markedly stronger. Different groups of pupils in every class make strong progress in reading. This is leading to broadly average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils gain a good understanding of the sounds that letters make from the minute they enter Reception. This accounts for their strong performance in the Year 1 phonics check. In lessons, pupils confidently tackle unfamiliar words with ease. They are more than happy to try and spell unknown words because they can break down and then rebuild the sounds they hear.
- Achievement in mathematics floundered last year. However, there are early signs of improvement. Pupils are making better progress because they are learning about all aspects of the mathematics curriculum. They are gaining the skills to tackle calculations with confidence. Nonetheless, not all have enough opportunity to put these skills to good use and to solve a range of mathematical problems.
- Pupils with special educational needs are making expected progress over time. This is due to the support they receive from skilled teaching assistants, external expertise and the extra sessions they take part in during the school day. The small number of disadvantaged pupils are keeping pace with their peers. Their achievement reflects that of others across the school. The most-able pupils make the same varied progress as their classmates. In some year groups their good starting points are not built on well enough. This means they fall back to reach average standards, rather than surging further forward in their learning.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Each year, almost all of the children who enter Reception are ready to make the most of their learning. Few need extra help to catch up. From the time they start school, children make the progress they should in most areas of learning. Consequently, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the time they leave Reception is broadly average. Most children are well placed to meet the demands of Year 1.
- Children blossom during their time in Reception in terms of their personal, social and emotional skills. Adults are very skilled in helping children to make good progress in this aspect of their learning through effective modelling of respectful relationships. Children have positive attitudes to learning, they sustain concentration, happily share equipment and take time to help each other out. The early years is a happy and harmonious place where children are nurtured to become valuable members of the school. Children behave well, follow instructions and enjoy their time with the adults who care for them. They are safe and secure because safeguarding procedures are met and welfare requirements are firmly in place.
- Children's skills in writing lag behind their success in other areas of learning. This is the key barrier that stops more children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception. Teaching does not go far enough in developing children as young writers. There are too few opportunities for children to try out their writing skills during the day.
- Adults work together seamlessly in the early years. Children and the small number of Year 1 pupils who are in this class benefit most from the small-group sessions led by adults. Good use of interesting resources and effective questioning helps children to make gains in their learning. This is proving particularly helpful in ensuring children gain a good grounding in phonics.
- However, this quality is not matched when children choose their own learning, particularly in the outdoor area. Provision for child-led activities often lacks purpose and challenge. Adults keep a careful check on children's progress but they do not always identify what children need to do next to strengthen their skills and knowledge.

- Adults do their best to help children make a smooth start at the school. They take the time to visit all of the different pre-school settings that children attend so they know the children well from the first day. They offer a number of visits and meeting for parents. They are beginning to involve parents more systematically in identifying children's starting points when they join school.
- The early years leader has worked in close partnership with local authority officers to audit all that is on offer in Reception. This honest and accurate appraisal means there are appropriate plans in place to lift the quality of teaching and help children make stronger gains in their learning. However, action to bring about this change has been thwarted due to the recent turmoil in staffing.

School details

Unique reference number	119571
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10001382

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Rainford
Headteacher	Angela Cottam
Telephone number	01254 878300
Website	http://www.st-wilfrids-ce12.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Email address	head@ribchester-st-wilfrids.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2011

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school.
- There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost all of the pupils who attend this school are of White British heritage. Everyone speaks English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The number of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is much lower than found nationally. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free schools meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's floor standards. These are the minimum standards and rate of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to the staff team. One teacher has recently returned from extended leave. Another teacher remains on extended leave. One teacher left the school at the end of the autumn term. Half of the classes are being taught by temporary teachers. Almost all of the current teachers are working in a different year group to the one they taught last year.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited every classroom on several occasions to observe teaching and pupils' learning.
- The inspector observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at play- and lunchtime. She met formally with two groups of pupils and heard pupils read during class visits.
- Meetings were held with staff, middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. She took account of school information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' books.
- The inspector spoke informally to a small group of parents at the start of the school day. She also considered the 20 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire), including 16 free text comments. The inspector took account of the 11 responses to the staff questionnaire and the findings from the questionnaire completed by 70 pupils.

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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