

Blackpool St Nicholas C of E Primary School

School Road, Marton Moss, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY4 5DS

Inspection dates	1–2 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, senior leaders, staff and governors have worked tirelessly to secure the outstanding improvements that this school has made since the previous inspection.
- With the full support of the church and community, senior leaders have boosted standards for pupils, improved the quality of teaching and created a purposeful and harmonious learning community.
- Governors' good knowledge and unquestionable commitment have supported the school well on its journey to becoming outstanding.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly effective. They are excellent role models, know pupils well and have exceedingly high expectations of them.
- Pupils attend school regularly and behave impeccably. They are proud of their school, welcoming, highly curious and confident.
- Pupils are resilient learners. They always learn from their mistakes and enjoy being challenged in class.
- Pupils make excellent progress in reading and mathematics. Their progress in writing is good and improving. Very occasionally, opportunities are missed for pupils to develop their writing skills in different subjects.
- Pupils' attainment has continually improved since the previous inspection and is above average at Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils are very well prepared for secondary education.
- Pupils benefit from a well-rounded and exciting curriculum. This develops their basic skills, broadens their experiences, and cultivates their love of learning and studious approach to finding out new things.
- Primary school sports funding is spent in an imaginative way to, for example, introduce pupils to fencing, karate and golf.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is promoted outstandingly well. There are a few gaps in pupils' knowledge about cultural diversity in modern Britain.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Typical responses from the many parents keen to talk to inspectors were, 'teachers are brilliant, caring and compassionate', 'my child's progress is astounding' and 'our children are extremely happy, safe and secure'.
- The leadership and management of the early years provision is outstanding. Children make a flying start in the Reception class and quickly develop excellent communication skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further enhance pupils' achievement in writing, particularly in Key Stage 2, by ensuring that they have every opportunity to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Further enhance pupils' understanding of cultural diversity by providing more opportunities for them to learn about different British communities, values and traditions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- This is an innovative school characterised by ambitious leadership. Leaving nothing to chance, the headteacher, supported by his strengthened senior leadership team, has taken a careful and measured approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Senior leaders and governors are determined to continually improve the quality of all aspects of the school, which they see as part of an ongoing process. This well-thought-out approach to leadership and management has ensured outstanding outcomes for pupils, and the exceptionally high quality of teaching that has been secured since the previous inspection.
- Middle leaders, including those responsible for reading, writing and mathematics, are highly organised. Not content with their achievement to date, they regularly scrutinise performance information, monitor teaching and marking, and talk to pupils about their learning. This information provides them with an excellent overview of the quality of teaching and enables them to produce their 'focused five-point plans' to continually improve standards across the school in all subjects.
- Teachers and teaching assistants benefit from excellent continuous professional development, delivered by skilled and experienced school leaders and other professionals. All teachers who spoke to inspectors said that their training and development have helped to improve their teaching practice. Teachers new to the profession are especially appreciative of the coaching and mentoring support available from the recently appointed assistant headteacher. This helps to develop their classroom practice and skills as teachers.
- Senior leaders are determined to ensure that disadvantaged pupils have no additional difficulties in school. Leaders provide very effective specialist speech and language support for children in the early years and targeted small-group support in reading, writing and mathematics. Additionally, 'mop-up' sessions and lunchtime homework clubs are available to help pupils with low attendance catch up with their peers.
- No pupil in this school misses out on any aspect of school life because of their personal or family circumstances. All participate in school trips and educational visits, as well as after-school activities. Due to this highly comprehensive support, disadvantaged pupils make at least the same excellent progress as their peers in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Pupils benefit from an extremely effective curriculum which promotes their reading and mathematical skills exceptionally well. Pupils' written work in English is often of outstanding quality. Senior leaders recognise that opportunities are occasionally missed for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills in subjects such as science, geography and history, and have made writing a focus for development in the school's development plans.
- Extra-curricular activities make a huge contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils have been recognised locally and nationally for their excellent singing, which the choir demonstrated recently at Wembley Stadium where they sang for supporters at the Rugby League Challenge Cup Final. Pupils enjoy playing various musical instruments, such as the clarinet, African drums and guitar, and learning languages such as Spanish, French and Mandarin. Year 6 pupils are especially keen on their school's annual visits to London and Paris, while those in Year 5 enjoy the team-building and outdoor activities available to them through their yearly outward-bound residential trip.
- Senior leaders develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development outstandingly well. Pupils in this school care deeply about each other. They regularly engage in common prayer, raise money for various charities and learn about the major world religions. Strong and mutually respectful relations between pupils of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage and their classmates help to ensure that Blackpool St Nicholas school is a harmonious and dynamic place to learn.
- The promotion of British values is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils have a strong sense of responsibility and are excellent ambassadors for their school. They exercise their democratic rights as eco and school council members, and show kindness and compassion as 'buddies' and 'chicken monitors' who care for the school's poultry. Pupils understand global citizenship and are knowledgeable about the work of national and worldwide leaders, past and present, such as William Wilberforce and Mahatma Gandhi. However, their understanding and appreciation of the culturally diverse nature of British society is not quite as well developed.

- The primary school sports funding is used highly effectively, enabling pupils to participate in ice skating, zumba, golf, boules and karate. Various sports equipment has been purchased, including tracksuits, 'hoodies' and cricket shirts. Funding is also used to promote pupils' participation in inter-school football, netball and cricket competitions. Coaches from a local football club help to improve pupils' health and develop their sporting skills. Coaches also develop the skills of staff in teaching a variety of sporting activities.
- Parents are highly complimentary about all aspects of the school, and rightly so. Repeatedly, parents said that their children's progress was 'brilliant', 'amazing' and 'astonishing'. Many are prepared to travel long distances to secure places for their children at the school because of its excellent reputation in the community. Parents say that they are kept well informed and that the headteacher's 'open sessions' to, for example, inform them of how they can best prepare their children for national tests are very useful.
- The school has a very productive relationship with its education consultant, who is of the view that the school has greatly improved since the previous inspection. Most recently, the consultant has supported the school in developing school improvement plans and new systems for assessing how well pupils are performing. The local authority regularly monitors the school's performance and feeds this information back to senior leaders.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have been with the school throughout its remarkable journey and are determined to improve the lives of pupils. They are trained well, fully up to date with developments in education and eager to be as effective as they can be. All have significant areas of responsibility, including for example the sports premium, early years provision, raising standards and pupil premium funding (additional government funding). This gives them an excellent knowledge and understanding of school life, and of the outstanding improvements that they have helped to secure since the previous inspection.
 - Governors' involvement in the school informs them that teaching is highly effective and pupils' behaviour 'stunning'. They qualify this with reference to pupils' outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics and their approach to learning.
 - Governors are fully aware of the positive impact that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has had on their achievement, but will not rest until there is no difference between the attainment of these pupils and their peers in school and nationally.
 - Governors recognise teaching excellence and are fully prepared to reward teachers for their hard work and dedication to the school through appropriate pay awards.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has highly efficient systems in place to ensure that pupils, and children in the early years, are safe at all times. Any concerns raised by pupils are logged electronically and sent to senior leaders. On receipt, instant responses are sent to members of staff indicating that matters are in hand.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is outstanding**

- Teachers are expert at getting pupils to take the lead in their learning. Never satisfied with correct answers alone, they insist that pupils explain their answers and think hard about their reasoning. This ensures that pupils develop into resilient and resourceful learners. Consistently highly effective teaching inspires pupils, and children in the early years, to listen carefully, learn from mistakes and achieve their very best.
- Pupils learn in bright, stimulating classrooms which celebrate their achievements. Information is readily available for pupils to help them to make their writing more interesting and technically accurate.
- All pupils know that it is important to read regularly. Each class has a designated 'class author' and areas where pupils can read, find out about the lives of authors and explore collections of their work.
- Teachers are highly adept at motivating pupils and using powerful questioning techniques. Learning takes place with a sense of urgency, which excites pupils and makes them want to learn. This was exemplified in a fast-moving Year 6 mathematics class, where all pupils were ready to respond instantly to their teacher's questions and challenges, such as 'How can maths be used in everyday life?', 'Tell me a fact about the numbers 5, 9 and 10' and 'How do I know that the number 981189 is a multiple of 9?' After that, pupils showed remarkable mental agility and speed when, on several occasions, they were challenged to use various operations and the numbers 75, 9, 6, 4 and 1 to calculate to 134. This approach to deepening pupils' understanding of mathematics is repeated throughout the school.

- Pupils' keenness to answer questions and teachers' outstanding skills at deepening pupils' understanding are also evident in English. This was shown in a Year 4 English class, where pupils immediately responded to the question 'Why do authors use alliteration?', agreeing that it was for dramatic effect. Then they considered each other's views on adverbs. After listening to a classmate, pupils commented 'I challenge that definition of an adverb.' Similarly, in a Year 3 class, pupils were encouraged to think carefully about how authors use language imaginatively and then challenged to identify and correct errors in a text.
- Teachers have high expectations for all pupils. Their enthusiasm and excellent subject knowledge ensures that all pupils make at least good progress during lessons. Different activities are planned for pupils and extra challenges are always available for any who complete their work early.
- Highly skilled teaching assistants are deployed well to work with small groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs or disability. They also work for short periods with pupils who are not quite sure of, for example, the meaning of certain words or the precise use of punctuation. After this, they quickly resume their activities and continue working alongside their peers.
- Pupils are immensely proud of their written work. They have many opportunities to write for different purposes and enjoy, for example, writing factual accounts of the lives of famous scientists and inventors such as Louis Pasteur, recounting their many educational visits and evaluating poems such as Alfred Noyes' 'The Highwayman'. Pupils' creative written work is often outstanding. Poignant prose, exemplified by a pupil's phrase: 'the morning sunlight danced elegantly through the silver clouds', is commonplace. Senior leaders and teachers know that pupils' written work could be even better and have made it a priority to ensure that pupils have every opportunity to practise and refine their writing skills across all subjects.
- By adhering to the school's marking and assessment policy, teachers skilfully advise and guide pupils in their learning. All teachers take a consistent approach to checking pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling. They insist that work in mathematics is correctly laid out and that pupils always show their calculation methods.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is outstanding**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils thrive in the calm and harmonious atmosphere of the school. They say that they feel safe and well looked after, and that they are confident to share any concerns they may have with any member of staff.
- Pupils are resilient. This cultivates their deep understanding of their own social and emotional needs, helping them to develop excellent relationships with their teachers and other staff.
- All groups of pupils, including those from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, are valued and respected for their uniqueness, cultural traditions and beliefs.
- Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of how to stay safe when online. They know what cyber bullying is and that it can occur on any device that is connected to the internet. Pupils know the school's procedures well in this area. For example, pupils are taught to take 'screen shots' of any offensive messages or inappropriate information that they receive, either while in school or when at home, and notify staff of it. This enables staff to talk to pupils about such matters and alert parents.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of safe and unsafe situations. Regular visitors to the school from the police, fire, health and family services ensure that pupils have a highly developed understanding of the dangers and risks they may face when not in school.
- The personal, social, emotional and health aspects of the curriculum equip pupils with an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and of why they should avoid alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils, teachers, parents and governors are of the view that behaviour is good. The school's behaviour logs show that behaviour is typically outstanding over time.
- Pupils are of the view that bullying rarely, if ever, happens. They have a good understanding of different kinds of discrimination, such as racism and homophobic bullying, which they say are not tolerated at school.
- Attendance is good. The school's highly successful work, including that of the family support worker, with families and the community, has helped to boost pupils' attendance; pupils know the relationship between good attendance and success in education and the world of work.

- Pupils enjoy coming together for their daily assemblies. Here, they behave impeccably and listen carefully. This helps them to fully understand the values of the school and start the day off mindful of the importance of, for example, perseverance and consideration for others.
- Pupils have a clear sense of social responsibility. They often volunteer to raise funds for good causes. They are eager to be involved in extra-curricular clubs and lunchtime activities, and play an active role in the democratic running of their school. This they do as eco council and school council members, and through discussing and debating topical issues in class.
- Pupils regularly attend the very popular 'extended care club', where they can enjoy a healthy breakfast in the morning and play games with their friends. After school, they participate enthusiastically in various sporting and creative activities.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- The school has been on a phenomenal journey since the previous inspection. Outcomes have improved rapidly in both key stages. Pupils make excellent progress, especially in reading and mathematics, and secure high standards.
- The school's records show that pupils made good and outstanding progress across all classes in 2015. The school's new assessment systems, and work in pupils' books, show that this trend is continuing as pupils, and children in the early years, make rapid progress and attain well.
- Pupils love to read and take every opportunity to do so. They make excellent progress and enjoy the work of a wide range of authors, including those who come into school to talk about their writing. The proportion of pupils who achieved the national standard in the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening check in 2015 was average. Virtually all pupils have good phonics knowledge at the end of Year 2 that helps to secure their success as able, confident readers.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics is outstanding because of excellent teaching and pupils' preparedness to be challenged. Work in books shows many examples of effective problem-solving and of pupils applying their well-developed calculation skills to practical, real-life situations. Pupils are expert at carrying out surveys, working out weights and measures and managing budgets.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in writing this year as shown in the excellent quality of the written work in their books and in their extended homework projects. Pupils are prepared to go the 'extra mile' and pursue their interest with family members through the 'talk homework' initiative. Year 5 pupils have created their own Anglo-Saxon museum, creating artefacts at home in their own time. Senior leaders' focus on developing writing skills across the curriculum is supporting pupils' improving attainment well, particularly where it is most needed in Key Stage 2.
- All groups of pupils, including boys, girls, minority ethnic group pupils, pupils of different abilities and those with special educational needs or disability, make good and often outstanding progress across the school. As with other groups, disadvantaged pupils made outstanding progress by the time they left school at the end of Year 6 in 2015. Their attainment matched that of other pupils nationally in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling, but was not quite as good in reading and writing. Senior leaders are determined to eliminate gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in reading, writing and mathematics in all groups and are well on their way to doing this.
- The school's excellent tracking systems enable senior leaders and teachers to chart the progress of each and every pupil. The highly effective support that those in danger of falling behind receive, including those with special educational needs or disability, ensures that no one in this school is left behind and that those who miss out on any part of their learning soon catch up to their peers.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- The leadership and management of all aspects of the early years provision are outstanding. The strong bonds that teachers and teaching assistants have with children ensure that they quickly develop into avid and inquisitive learners. These bonds, coupled with stimulating indoor and outdoor leaning and playing areas, help to ensure that children enjoy learning and make exceptional progress.
- Children enter the Reception class with different skills in various areas of learning. For example, in 2015 most children had well-developed skills in counting and number recognition, while their language and communication skills were less well developed. However, the excellent start that children get off to ensures that they soon become good listeners and excellent communicators.

- In 2015 an above-average proportion of children entered Year 1 with the necessary skills for the next stage of their learning and development. The current cohort of children is performing even better. They are attaining highly in all areas of learning.
- Staff have exceptionally high expectations of children, praising them for their achievements and encouraging them to persevere and do their best. Adults are creative and bring learning to life. This was evident during the inspection when children came into their class intrigued to find evidence that there had been an 'intruder'. All signs, including large messy footprints, rubbish and knocked over bins, indicated that a bear had visited during the night. With sheer delight, children enthusiastically put on their coats and waterproofs to set off on a bear hunt. Meanwhile, other children looked at pictures of bears and learned about their habitats and eating habits.
- Children's behaviour is exemplary. They stop whatever they are doing immediately when asked to do so, despite there being almost 60 children in one classroom. They are tidy and orderly and always 'choose it, use it and put it away'. Children are sensible and considerate at all times. They use items such as scissors safely, and move around their indoor and outdoor learning areas carefully and with consideration for others.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff know children exceptionally well and cater precisely for their learning needs. They know exactly how well different groups of children are doing because they constantly monitor their progress and set work at the right level. This was demonstrated during several different phonics sessions where children worked in small groups. Maintaining children's attention, staff gave praise for their accurate 'ff', 'il', 'ai', and 'ee' sounds and for their 'think it, say it, write it' activities.
- Children are artistic and creative, and enjoy exploring the world around them. They have many opportunities to investigate the properties of liquids, count, measure different shapes, read, engage in construct activities and talk to each other about their learning. Children regularly visit places of interest such as the Blackpool Tower Circus and the Sealife Centre. They enjoy participating in the forest school and regularly cook, using the eggs laid by the school chickens.
- The comprehensive profiles that are held on each child are shared with parents. These are based on extensive observations and assessments of children's skills in different areas of learning. 'Tweets' and 'wow' moments are shared with parents regularly. Parents are appreciative of the many opportunities available for them to get involved in their children's learning. They are invited to 'stay and play' sessions and storytelling events.
- Parents rightly believe that their children are safe and well cared for. Staff ensure that the same outstanding safeguarding procedures in operation in Key Stages 1 and 2 are also in operation in the Reception class.

School details

Unique reference number	119594
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10002283

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	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hamish Martin
Headteacher	Andrew Mellor
Telephone number	01253 608900
Website	www.st-nicholas-blackpool.org.uk
Email address	andrew.mellor@st-nicholas.blackpool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2013

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is just below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. Almost all minority ethnic pupils are of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection there have been a number of appointments, including three newly qualified teachers. The senior leadership team has been restructured to include an assistant headteacher. The governing body has been restructured and a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed.
- Before- and after-school 'extended care' clubs operate from the site, both of which are managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised in class and separately with senior leaders.
- Inspectors considered 49 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 31 text responses from parents. Inspectors met informally with parents at the beginning of the school day. The school's own surveys of parents' and pupils' views were also taken into account, as well as responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 30 members of staff and 40 pupils.
- A meeting was held with four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Meetings were held with school leaders responsible for reading, writing, mathematics, early years provision, and provision for pupils with special educational needs or disability.
- A meeting was held with the school's education consultant.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included development plans, safeguarding documentation, information about pupils' progress, the school's reviews of its own performance, checks on the quality of teaching and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Samantha Kidd	Ofsted Inspector
Pamela Potter	Ofsted Inspector

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