

Accrington St Mary Magdalen's Church of England Primary School

Devonshire Street, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 1DW

Inspection dates	2–3 March 2016
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

- Pupils achieve well overall. From starting points below those typically expected for their age, pupils make at least good progress.
- Teaching is mainly good throughout the school. This is leading to pupils making faster progress than previously and their attainment is rising.
- The teaching of reading is a particular strength of the school.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and their good behaviour make a strong contribution to their learning.
- Pupils get along well together and are proud of their school. They have a particularly good understanding of British values and their place in the community.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is good.
- Senior leaders, including governors, are working effectively to sustain improvements. They are very clear about the direction the school must take to improve further.
- Parents agree that the school is improving well. They are highly positive about the dedicated support their children receive. Very effective support is given to vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school, and parents agree. Pupils have an especially effective grasp of how to keep themselves safe on the internet.
- Staff take very good care of all pupils. There are strong supportive relationships with parents, particularly in the early years.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders and managers at all levels do not always use plans well enough to improve the school and to accurately check how well the school is doing.
- Governors are not consistently aware of how much progress the school is making, which reduces their effectiveness to fully hold senior leaders to account.
- The systems used in early years to assess how well children are progressing are not always robust enough to ensure that all children make the best possible progress.
- There are insufficient opportunities for younger children to learn and play outdoors.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management further by:
 - ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels, including middle leaders, effectively check the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement so that plans for improvement are always used well and are appropriately targeted
 - ensuring that governors are consistently aware of how the school is performing to fully challenge senior leaders and hold them to account for the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning.

- Build on the improvements already made in early years by:
 - ensuring that assessments used to measure how well the pupils are doing are always robust and accurate
 - ensuring that expectations are consistently high so that progress continues to accelerate
 - ensuring sufficient opportunities for children to develop their learning outdoors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has been successful in her drive to improve the school since the previous inspection. Decisive action has been taken, and all groups of pupils are now making much better progress than previously because of significant improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Recent changes to the leadership team have resulted in additional strengths and expertise. Expectations have risen, particularly in Key Stage 2, and there is a clear sense of teamwork across the whole school.
- Staff are provided with a wide range of professional development and training opportunities, which they value. This has resulted in improvements to teaching, particularly in reading where achievement is improving rapidly.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils have a wide range of experiences. They particularly enjoy visits and visitors. These include trips to the forest school and the life education bus. After-school activities are well attended. The school choir is particularly popular and performs to a very high standard.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding is well developed. An active school council regularly raises money for charity, including MacMillan cancer research. Pupils have a good understanding of a wide range of religions that are reflected in their community and they attend the local museum on a regular basis.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about British values. For example, they could talk about the Queen's birthday and the importance of Parliament. In addition, Year 6 pupils were able to discuss, as part of their guided reading, elements of democracy in politics. This means pupils have a good understanding of equality of opportunity.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is strong. The newly appointed coordinator is working diligently to ensure that the support provided for these children is effective and well targeted. This means that these pupils are now making good progress from their individual starting points.
- The additional funding the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils is used extremely well. These pupils are given extra support both academically and socially. For example, an after-school club to improve mathematics is provided alongside emotional support from a school counsellor should it be required. As a result, these pupils make very good progress; the gap with their peers is closing and in some year groups has closed.
- Leaders use additional funding to promote sport in school effectively. Pupils have access to a range of sports both within PE lessons and in after-school clubs. A specialist PE coach also works across the school. This has meant a rise in the number of pupils taking up sport in school and in local sporting clubs.
- The school has been well supported by the local authority and this has led to improvements in teaching and the achievement of pupils.
- Parents are largely supportive of the school's work. Typically, one parent said, 'the teachers go the extra mile to help and support both pupils and parents'.
- The plans the school uses to drive improvements do not always accurately identify how leaders, including middle leaders, should check and measure how well the school is doing. As a consequence, some leaders do not always have a consistently clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are extremely committed to the success of the school and are involved in many aspects of school life.
 - They understand performance data and have a broad understanding of how well the school is doing. However, they are not consistently aware of how well the school is progressing to be able to ask questions that are specific enough to challenge senior leaders effectively and hold them to account.
 - Governors are well aware of how funding, including the pupil premium (additional government funding), is spent and the impact it is having on improving outcomes for pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and create a safe culture in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- There has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection because expectations have risen. Pupils now achieve well. Teachers have an increased understanding of what constitutes effective learning and are far more aware of their impact on pupils' progress.
- Teachers plan interesting and engaging lessons. They question and probe pupils effectively to ensure that they have a secure understanding of their learning and they skilfully intervene when a pupil may need extra support.
- A recent drive to improve pupils' reading in school has been successful. Older pupils talked enthusiastically about books they had read, while younger pupils were able to use their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to help them read. A reading lesson in Year 6, for example, allowed pupils to develop their comprehension skills while learning about Norse myths. The emphasis on reading skills across the school has meant that pupils are now making good progress in reading.
- Pupils enjoy learning and work well together in class to help each other make progress. For example, in Year 5 one pupil demonstrated to the rest of the class how they could tackle and solve problems by using and applying their mathematical skills in a range of practical situations.
- Systems to assess how well pupils are doing in their work are improving well. Teachers are increasingly effective in their understanding of what pupils need to do to improve. They make positive and helpful comments in pupils' books, which has resulted in pupils making much better progress in their work.
- Information technology is used effectively throughout the school to enhance pupils' learning. For example, pupils are given a wide range of opportunities for programming and coding.
- Teaching assistants generally make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They often support groups in class or provide extra support outside the classroom for pupils who are struggling. On occasions, some teaching assistants are a little too passive at the start of lessons, which reduces their impact on pupils' learning.

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 report feeling safe in school and parents wholeheartedly agree.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying. They say that any form of bullying in school is extremely rare and is dealt with swiftly if it does occur.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including on school trips and while playing. They have a particularly good understanding of e-safety and how to keep themselves safe on the internet. This is as a result of good teaching about being online and using social networking.
- Pupils understand the need for a healthy lifestyle. There are a number of displays encouraging pupils to 'eat 5 a day' and many pupils take part in sporting activities, both in school and outside, to promote their well-being.
- Pupils are given a number of roles and responsibilities in school, which allow them to develop their leadership skills. These include: school chaplains, who help other pupils to make the right choices, house captains, who lead their teams, and school councillors who discuss issues and ways to improve the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are extremely well mannered and conduct themselves well. They are proud of their school and their positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their learning.
- Parents are extremely positive about the way in which the school manages behaviour. One parent said, 'my child's behaviour has improved immensely since starting at the school'.
- The school's systems and strategies for dealing with the small incidents of challenging behaviour are extremely effective. Help and support are provided to these pupils so that their learning or the learning of others is not disturbed in the slightest.
- Attendance is very good and children are very keen to come to school. The number of children who are

persistently absent has seen a dramatic drop over the last year. This is as a result of the effective work of leaders and the pastoral manager to ensure that parents fully understand the need for consistent attendance and the impact of poor attendance on pupils' progress.

Outcomes for pupils **are good**

- Pupils start school with skills and knowledge below that typically expected for their age. As a result of increasingly strong provision, they now make good progress and by the time they leave Year 6 pupils are broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good achievement overall from their starting points.
- School data have seen a strong and steady improvement over the last three years. In 2015, the progress pupils made, particularly in Key Stage 2, was good and for some pupils it was outstanding. This reflects the school's effectiveness in raising standards and accelerating pupils' achievement.
- Achievement in reading in 2015 was not as strong as in writing and mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 1. However, current school data and work in pupils' books indicate that this is no longer the case and pupils are making strong and much better progress in Year 1 and 2. This is because of rapid improvements to teaching and increased expectations by teachers of the progress pupils should make.
- As a result of good teaching in phonics pupils achieve results broadly in line with national averages in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- By the end of Year 6, disadvantaged pupils had not achieved as well as their classmates in 2015. However, as a result of very effective interventions to support those pupils currently in the school, they are now closing the gap with their peers and in some year groups it has closed because of early intervention and well-targeted provision.
- Assessment information indicates that the higher than average proportion of Pakistani pupils make good progress through school. By the end of Year 6 they achieve as well as their classmates because of strong support and high expectations from staff.
- As a result of leadership changes, pupils with special educational needs or disability are now making good progress. This is because of early intervention, well-focused support and increased expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Early years provision **is good**

- Children enter Reception with skills and knowledge below those typically expected for their age; in some cases, they are well below. In addition, a small number of pupils start Reception with little or no English. They make at least expected progress and in some cases good progress, leaving Reception with skills just slightly below those typically expected for their age. The majority are ready for Year 1.
- Early years has undergone a number of changes in recent months. There has been a significant change in staffing and the school has adopted a new approach to the way it organises the provision in the classroom. These changes have been extremely positive and staff have worked hard to implement them. However, while improvements in provision are clearly evident it does mean that some staff are still adapting to the changes and, as a result, expectations about what the children can achieve in their learning are not always high enough and the way that teachers assess children's progress is not as robust as it should be.
- The teaching of phonics and early reading skills is good. Children know a range of sounds and can use these in their reading and writing.
- Children love their learning. They are excited to learn in many different ways. For example, children were actively engaged in the home corner, making pies and drinks for visitors. Others were making Spider-Man in the construction area, while another group planted seeds.
- Children also enjoy learning outdoors. They were excited to be outside in the snowy weather. One child commented, 'I love snow because it tickles my head.' However, senior leaders are well aware that at present there are too few opportunities to fully develop children's learning outdoors to supplement their learning inside.
- There are very good relationships with parents, who value the good start their children make. One parent commented, 'my child started school in September and has been very vocal about how much he enjoys going and learning at school'.

- Procedures to keep children safe are good. Policies and procedures are communicated effectively and adhered to by all.

School details

Unique reference number	119446
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10002254

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorna Kenyon
Headteacher	Karen Hardman
Telephone number	01254 232329
Website	www.st-marymagdalens.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	head@st-marymagdalens.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 December 2013

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school, which has grown over the last two years.
- The majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds.
- There is a higher than average proportion of Pakistani pupils.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average.
- There have been several changes to the leadership since the previous inspection. The deputy headteacher left and there are two deputy headteachers and a new special needs coordinator.
- The school is an old Victorian building, but has undergone a number of refurbishments.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in lessons, including one observation carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors listened to pupils reading. They looked at examples of pupils' work and observed pupils at lunchtime and breaktimes.
- The inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. They spoke to parents as they brought their children to school.
- The inspectors took account of 27 questionnaires returned by staff. There were 12 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including data on pupils' current progress across the school, the school's view of its own effectiveness and how the school checks on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The inspectors checked the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and looked at records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

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