

The Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

Balmoral Road, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 3BT

Inspection dates	4–5 May 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

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have been successful in their drive to raise standards since the previous inspection. Pupils are now making good progress and their achievement in English and mathematics has improved rapidly.
- The headteacher, ably supported by a new and developing leadership team, has worked tirelessly and effectively to secure improvements in teaching and learning and raise expectations across the school. Teaching, learning and assessment is now good.
- Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the school's further improvement, shown in their accurate self-evaluation and sharp improvement planning.
- Leaders and staff are particularly effective in helping those pupils who join school at different times of the year, including those who have no, or very little, spoken English.
- The school supports disadvantaged pupils well and their progress has accelerated.
- Pupils behave well; they are courteous and work and play harmoniously together. They show a high level of care and consideration for each other.
- Pupils say that school is a safe and friendly place to be. Procedures to keep pupils safe are robust.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception class and make effective progress from their various starting points.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress made by the most-able pupils is not always as strong as it could be.
- Opportunities for pupils to engage in more creative subjects and activities are limited.
- On occasions in the early years, some activities do not engage children sufficiently in learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the progress made by the most-able pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what these pupils can achieve
 - the work set for the most able provides an appropriate level of challenge
 - leaders regularly assess and evaluate their progress.

- Broaden the range of activities offered to pupils by:
 - providing more opportunities to engage in creative subjects such as art, music and drama
 - seeking ways to celebrate pupils' creative achievements.

- Further improve teaching and learning in the early years by:
 - providing opportunities that engage children, especially the most able, in more sustained learning activities, both indoors and outdoors
 - ensuring that the organisation of learning in Reception year is adapted as the year progresses to meet the needs of all children and ensure that they are prepared for Year 1
 - seeking ways to enliven the classroom environment and the outdoor area to encourage children to be interested in letters and words and their meaning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, who is supported well by senior leaders and governors, has a clear and ambitious vision to make the school the best it can be. She has developed a culture where the needs of pupils come first and an ethos which is welcoming, happy and purposeful. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved and pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are consistently good. As a consequence, pupils' outcomes have also improved.
- As a consequence of the headteacher's ambitious and infectious enthusiasm, staff are highly motivated to do well. They have recognised the need for change and have welcomed the increased focus on their professional development.
- The headteacher and governors are committed to strengthening provision and this has enabled them to make significant changes to the school and its environment. For example, modern screen technology has been installed in every classroom and in lessons this is used well by teachers to stimulate and enliven the learning experience for pupils.
- Senior leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance is rigorous and accurate. They know the school well and understand what needs to improve further. There are clear plans in place to check on the quality of teaching, learning and the progress that all pupils make. The progress of the most-able pupils, however, is not monitored and evaluated closely enough.
- Senior leaders have coped particularly well with the fact that approximately a quarter of the pupils come and go at various times in their primary age schooling. Some of this movement is linked to parents from abroad studying at the local university; as a consequence, their children enter school at various ages, sometimes with little, or no, spoken English. School leaders and staff have developed good systems to assess and successfully introduce these pupils to primary school life; this is an inclusive and welcoming school.
- Subject leaders have worked hard to strengthen reading, writing and mathematics across the school. Their success can be seen in the improved quality of learning taking place in lessons but also in the abundance of literacy and numeracy guidance displayed in classrooms and around the school.
- Senior leaders are successfully narrowing the gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils within the school and nationally. Following the review of the use of the pupil premium recommended at the last inspection, leaders and governors now ensure that funds are spent effectively to reduce any barriers to learning. The impact of pupil premium funding is carefully monitored by the headteacher and discussed and evaluated by the governors.
- The leadership and organisation of special educational needs provision has been strengthened. Revised systems and procedures have been put in place and the role of the new inclusion manager has been clarified. A nurture room has been established and pupil and parent counselling arrangements have been changed. These developments help to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs or disability continue to thrive.
- Work to develop and embed the new primary curriculum is ongoing. Leaders are evaluating and reshaping the curriculum so that it better meets the needs of the pupils and, in doing so, are aware that it needs to be broadened to include a fuller range of subjects and activities. Opportunities for pupils to engage in more creative aspects such as art, music and drama are underdeveloped. Similarly, pupils' achievements in these creative areas are under-represented in displays around school. After-school clubs enhance the curriculum.
- The primary school physical education and sports funding is used well to increase pupils' participation in sport, provide staff training and secure the services of specialist sports coaches. Outdoor education is a notable feature of the curriculum, with all pupils attending specialist outdoor and adventurous activity days at Borwick Hall. There are also residential trips for pupils in Years 4 and 6.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well. Leaders work with a range of partners to broaden pupils' experiences of the world. These include educational visits to places of interest, visiting theatre groups, science fairs, after-school and lunchtime clubs. The breakfast club has proved successful in nurturing social interaction among pupils of different ages. Pupils are also developing their understanding of fundamental British values. They learn about tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. Pupils also enjoy taking on responsibilities such as being members of the school council.
- Parents spoken with were extremely positive about the changes the school has made since the arrival of the headteacher in 2015. They particularly like the open-door policy that allows parents to enter school at the start of the day with their children and discuss with staff any particular issues.

- The local authority has provided good support to the school. It has supported the governing body with the appointment of senior leaders and has brokered links with other successful schools to support leadership. A particular, and effective, aspect of the local authority's tailored package of support has been the provision of an experienced mentor from a successful school to coach the headteacher.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have been on a journey of improvement since the time of the last inspection and through that process have strengthened their role and impact significantly. They responded constructively to the review of governance that took place following the last inspection. Governors have demonstrated that they are very committed to change and improvement but, at the same time, have been careful to base their decision making on a firm and robust understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, they are able to support and challenge school leaders effectively.
 - Governors are well organised and they provide a range of relevant skills and experience which helps to drive improvement. They have received effective training and support from the local authority which has been valuable and timely. Governors visit the school regularly to familiarise themselves with the school's performance. The governors share the passion and determination of school leaders in achieving the school's commendable mission statement, which includes that 'Each person's unique value is recognised and nurtured so that, through God's grace we can grow, learn and realise our full potential'.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are robust. Staff receive regular training and are well versed in how to keep children safe. Rigorous checks are completed on all new staff and regular visitors to the school and leaders ensure that records are kept up to date. Case studies of the school's work show that where children are at risk, policies are closely adhered to and the school engages well with other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The teaching at Cathedral Primary is characterised by warm and caring relationships between the staff and pupils and well-organised lessons. As a result, the atmosphere in classrooms is purposeful and inclusive. Staff have high aspirations for pupils and expect them to work hard and behave well. Pupils readily talk to each other to discuss and develop their ideas. Pupils say that teachers 'make learning fun' and that teachers help them when they are unsure.
- The development of reading and writing skills is given a high priority in the school. Daily reading activities ensure that pupils have the opportunity to read to adults or complete other reading tasks, which enable them to improve their comprehension skills. The profile of writing has been raised since the time of the last inspection, including through more opportunities for pupils to engage in extended writing activities. The quality of pupils' handwriting is good and the general presentation of pupils' work is exemplary in some classes.
- Pupils' knowledge and skills in mathematics are developed by having a clear whole-school strategy which outlines how pupils can build on their prior learning when completing their studies. Work in pupils' books shows that they have lots of opportunities to practise their calculation skills and develop their mathematical reasoning when solving problems. Work is well matched to pupils' abilities, as shown in a Year 5 mathematics lesson where pupils were studying analogue and digital clock times. The activities provided for the pupils were matched to the varying abilities and this ensured that all pupils were suitably challenged and they made good progress. Pupils enjoy mathematics and working with numbers. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils enjoyed counting in tens to a hundred forwards and backwards by chanting out their responses to a clapped rhythm.
- Teachers plan activities that pupils enjoy and these often act as a stimulus for writing. In a Year 6 lesson, the pupils responded well to an engaging piece of text chosen by the teacher to promote their understanding of figurative language. The pupils showed that they had a good command of the technical aspects of writing. Staff are adept at capturing pupils' interest and enthusiasm to want to write. At the start of a Year 2 English lesson, for example, a 'surprise' letter was delivered to the class from the head of the outdoor education centre that the pupils had visited the day before. This was used as the planned stimulus for a lesson on finding out information from letters and it was very effective in engaging the pupils' interest and imagination.

- School leaders emphasise the importance of having a vibrant and informative learning environment. Classroom displays have a good mix of useful information, such as important words and punctuation. Pupils make effective reference to displays of work they have completed previously to help them in mathematics and English. Displays in classrooms and around the school celebrate pupils' achievement in writing.
- Teachers are skilled at knowing what pupils can already do and ensure that new learning builds on this. This ensures that pupils make swift progress. Occasionally, however, the work provided for the most able does not challenge and stretch them sufficiently.
- Teachers' questioning skills are good. They question pupils skilfully to first assess what pupils understand and then help pupils to deepen their thinking by asking follow-on questions so as to enhance their learning. Similarly, pupils are asked to explain their reasoning when solving problems and this consolidates their understanding. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, the teacher encouraged the pupils to help her solve number problems by using phrases such as 'What do you think I could do next?' and 'Who can help me with this?'
- Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to lessons; they are directed well by teachers and are clear about their role. On occasions, however, they do not use questioning well enough to allow pupils to think for themselves.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, in line with the school's policy. They praise what the pupils have done well and provide guidance to help them to improve their work further.

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 feel safe in school and this is a view shared by the vast majority of parents who completed the 'Parent View' questionnaire. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet and social media.
- Leaders have ensured that staff and governors are well trained to help keep pupils safe. The school has well-considered policies in place which are adhered to by staff and ensure that the school is a safe environment. All adults, including visitors, are vetted as being suitable to work with children. Recording of information is robust. Case studies demonstrate that pupils whose current circumstances might make them vulnerable are well supported by staff, who work with other agencies when necessary.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that bullying is very rare. Occasionally, there is some name calling, which staff deal with quickly and effectively. Pupils' knowledge of different kinds of bullying is strong because the curriculum includes much work on promoting good relationships and nurturing positive attitudes towards each other. They are taught about different forms of bullying, such as racism and homophobia, and have an aversion to any form of discrimination.
- Parents appreciate the high quality of pastoral support that the school provides. As one parent stated: 'fantastic welfare support offered by a friendly and welcoming team'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud to come to Cathedral Primary and are highly courteous towards each other, to staff and to visitors alike. Pupils will hold open doors for each other and adults and readily say 'hello' or 'good morning' as they walk around school; their manners are impeccable.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The behaviour policy is consistently applied by all members of staff and the consequences of poor behaviour are well known by the pupils, along with the rewards for good behaviour. Pupils enjoy gaining 'house' and 'table' points, which lead to special treats.
- In all classes, around the school and outside on the playground, inspectors witnessed very positive behaviour.
- Pupils are of the opinion that behaviour is good most of the time. They say that when there are occasional arguments these are quickly sorted out by staff. They talk proudly about the 'calm area' in the playground, where they can go to be peaceful and talk with friends. Pupils enjoy taking on roles of responsibility in school. Older pupils enjoy being 'playground leaders', where they ensure that all pupils have somebody to play with. There is also a school council who meet with the headteacher to discuss how things might improve in school. Pupils are listened to; their voices are heard.

- Leaders have worked very hard to improve attendance by revamping the systems used to manage, encourage and celebrate attendance. The introduction of a school breakfast club has helped to boost pupils' attendance. Attendance is now similar to the national average and the level of persistent absence has reduced. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved to over 95%. The new business support officer has a defined role aimed at further improving levels of attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Senior leaders and governors have focused resources and time on improving the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils' overall achievement across the school has improved and their outcomes are good.
- By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, pupils achieve as well as all pupils nationally, with some pupils doing better than this. This indicates good progress over time, particularly when considering that over a third of pupils, many with limited English, join the school at times other than the usual starting points.
- The school has improved its effectiveness in ensuring that most groups of pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs or disability, the disadvantaged and those who join the school with a limited knowledge of English language, achieve well over time. Current school performance data, which has been checked by the local authority, indicates that the improving trend shown in the 2015 results is set to continue this year.
- Due to the good teaching across the school, learning outcomes are strong for most groups of pupils. On occasions, however, the progress made by the most-able pupils in class is not as strong as it could be. Occasionally, the work provided for them lacks sufficient challenge.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the national screening check for phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) at the end of Year 1 has improved from below the national average in 2013 to above average in 2015, when 82% of pupils reached the expected standard. By the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils with a secure grasp of phonics is higher than the national figure. Pupils' reading skills, including those of lower-ability pupils, are developing well.
- Key stage 1 assessments in 2015 show a marked improvement on previous years' performance. Most pupils achieved the expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Their attainment was similar to the national average. The school is expecting achievement in all subjects in 2016 to be at least as strong as last year. This confidence is supported by inspection evidence.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2015, pupils' attainment in reading, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling was higher than in previous years. Attainment was particularly strong in mathematics where a quarter of the pupils achieved the higher level 6. In writing and reading, the school's results were similar to the national average. Pupils made good progress to achieve these results, particularly in reading and mathematics. The school's assessment records show an improved profile of achievement over time and the school is predicting results in 2016 to be at least as good as last year. Inspection evidence from lesson observations, a scrutiny of pupils' books and discussion with pupils about their work indicates that the school's expectations are realistic.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability achieve well. Their progress is carefully monitored by regular assessments of their work. When pupils are not making the progress expected, plans are quickly put into place to ensure that they catch up rapidly.
- In 2015, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 was similar to their peers in school and other pupils nationally. Current school records indicate that disadvantaged pupils across the school are continuing to make good progress.
- Most-able pupils made at least the progress expected of them in reading, English, spelling, punctuation and grammar and mathematics in 2015, but their progress was less strong in writing. In the 2015 national tests, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 was above that of other pupils nationally in reading and in spelling, punctuation and grammar but was similar to the national average in mathematics. It was below the national figure in writing.

Early years provision

is good

- Approximately half of the children joining school in the Reception class have attended nursery provision. Some children have not attended any pre-school provision and some have limited spoken English. The

children entering the Reception class have a broad span of knowledge and skills but, overall, these are below those typically found. Children make a positive start in the Reception class, settling in quickly to its routines and activities. The Reception classroom is colourful, vibrant and staff are welcoming. The children are happy and enjoy learning and exploring the many opportunities provided for them. A particular strength of the early years provision is the high number of support staff who, together with the teacher, ensure that the children receive a lot of individual attention, care and support. The high adult-to-child ratio results in plenty of opportunities for adults to talk with children; this is particularly effective in developing the children's confidence in using language and enhancing their verbal communication skills. Around the Reception classroom, however, there are too few opportunities for children to read and recognise letters and words.

- The proportion of children who are expected to achieve a good level of development in 2016 indicates considerable improvement on previous years.
- Teaching in the early years is good; it builds upon children's interests and helps to develop their love of learning. The children love working with numbers and talking about how many model dinosaurs they can count. The most-able understand two-digit numbers and can explain how many tens there are and how many units there are in a two-digit number. As a result of effective and well-planned teaching, most of these children make steady progress. Occasionally, however, the activities provided for the most-able children lack challenge and are too easy to complete.
- Expectations of behaviour are high and adults help children to understand the importance of treating one another politely and with respect. As a consequence, children's behaviour is good. Children share resources and play and learn together harmoniously. They are effectively supervised by staff, who ensure that they are kept secure and safe while not hampering their imaginative play. Teaching promotes the importance of children listening carefully when information or instructions are being provided.
- Occasionally, the level of sustained and purposeful learning taking place in the Reception class is reduced when too many children choose activities, some of which are undemanding, and this results in a few children flitting between activities. The early years leader has well-judged plans to adapt the balance of activities for children as the year progresses to better prepare them for learning in Year 1.
- The outdoor environment is used well through the provision of imaginative and exciting activities designed to encourage the children to explore and find things out for themselves. This was evident when the children had to see how they could roll objects from a higher level to a lower level using a series of pipes. Opportunities to stretch and challenge the most-able children through outdoor education are underdeveloped.
- The early years manager leads the provision well. She uses accurate and regular assessments to track children's progress and ensure that teaching activities are planned to address any gaps in learning. Parents are well informed about how well their children are doing.

School details

Unique reference number	119621
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10012194

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	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father S Pearson
Headteacher	Kelly Hannah
Telephone number	01524 64686
Website	www.cathedral.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	bursar@cathedral.school.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 June 2014

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British, with approximately 32% of pupils from other ethnic minority groups.
- Pupils are taught in seven single-year group classes.
- A quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language and there are nine languages other than English spoken by pupils. A fifth of pupils have an Eastern European background.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is around average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after.
- The school has a high level of pupil mobility; a third of all pupils started the school at times other than in the Reception Year. In the current Year 5 and 6 classes, only 60% of the pupils joined the school in the Reception class. Three new pupils joined the school during the inspection.
- 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.
- There have been a number of changes to staffing and governance since the previous inspection. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2015 (the new headteacher had been associate deputy in the school since November 2014). There have been several changes to the governing body, including the appointment of a new chair of the governing body in 2015.
- The new headteacher has been supported by a mentor headteacher from a successful Lancashire school.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes and in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school, including break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and in learning journals in the early years.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, inclusion manager and subject leads. An inspector met with five members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority and the headteacher acting as mentor for the new headteacher.
- A group of key stage 1 and a group of key stage 2 pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with inspectors. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils on the playground.
- Parental responses to Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. Inspectors also spoke with parents informally before and after school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documents, including minutes from the governing body, information on pupils' outcomes, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its improvement planning. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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