

Poplar Street Primary School

Ravenwood Drive, Audenshaw, Manchester M34 5EF

Inspection dates

21–22 June 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is an improving school. The governing body and senior leaders have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is a strength of the school. Teachers have embraced the school's new approach to assessment and are using their incisive knowledge about pupils' learning to make good use of lesson time.
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge helps them to ask questions to deepen pupils' understanding, provide clear explanations and plan work that engages and enthuses pupils.
- The school's actions to improve outcomes for boys in the early years and key stage 1 have made sure that they catch up quickly with girls.
- Staff take good care of pupils. They provide high-quality support to the most vulnerable members of their school community.
- The school's actions to address underperformance in writing are making a positive difference to most pupils' outcomes. As a result, pupils' attainment is rapidly improving across almost all year groups and is catching up quickly with that of pupils nationally.
- In mathematics, pupils are enjoying the increased opportunities to take part in activities which make them 'think hard'. This approach is improving attitudes to the subject and increasing the numbers of pupils meeting and exceeding age-related expectations.
- Despite the overwhelming majority of children starting school with skills and knowledge below that typical for their age, by the end of Year 6 they have caught up with pupils nationally.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their high attendance rates.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school has not addressed the weaknesses identified in the outdoor provision in the early years quickly enough.
- Leaders have not yet ensured that policies and practice are consistently applied across school by all staff and pupils so that their high expectations are met.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the urgency with which leaders and governors are addressing the deficiencies in provision in the early years so that pupils have access to high-quality outdoor activities.
- Increase the rigour with which leaders, including governors, ensure that all agreed policies, including those relating to behaviour, homework, marking and presentation are followed by all staff and pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked well together to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have sought advice and guidance from a national leader of education as well as collaborating with a group of local schools to help them improve performance across the school.
- Staff and parents hold school leaders in high regard. They recognise the improvements the school has made over the past two years. Leaders' high visibility around school and their willingness to make time to talk means that any concerns are dealt with quickly. Staff and pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud to be part of Poplar Street.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have used this information well to help them target areas of underperformance. However, they have not acted as quickly as they should have done to address the weaknesses in the outdoor provision in the early years.
- The school's curriculum has developed since a review two years ago. Teachers in charge of subjects other than English and mathematics are helping their colleagues to further engage and enthuse pupils through exciting topics that link learning across the curriculum. Pupils and staff speak positively about the 'engage and excite weeks' which enable pupils to take their learning beyond the classroom. For example, Year 2 built model houses to recreate the City of London. They invited the fire brigade to set fire to their model city and looked at how quickly the fire spread through the houses and what factors helped and hindered that process. This approach helped pupils to secure skills and knowledge in history and science.
- The school promotes pupils' engagement in a range of sporting, cultural and artistic events. All pupils are working towards the Arts Award. For one of their art projects all pupils produced a piece of work that was then exhibited in the school art gallery. Parents were invited to visit the gallery and to buy some of the exhibits. Pupils take part in weekly singing assemblies and a number of pupils learn the clarinet and piano. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 take part in residential trips, culminating in a trip to London that includes a visit to Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, a visit to the local police museum as part of their topic on 'Crime and Punishment' helped Year 5 pupils gain an insight into how the British justice system works. When learning about the refugee crisis across Europe, Year 6 pupils wrote to their Greek pen pals to find out how the crisis was affecting their day-to-day lives.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved because leaders, supported by governors, have applied more rigour to performance management. All staff benefit from training both in their own school and through the local consortium partnership.
- Middle leaders have taken on greater responsibility since the previous inspection. They have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities through the range of local and national training that they access. Middle leaders also take greater responsibility in monitoring the quality of provision for pupils, through learning walks, and work scrutiny and pupil performance data.
- Teachers have embraced the new approach to assessment implemented by leaders. Teachers now have an accurate, up-to-date view of how each and every pupil is getting on and they use this information well to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. Immediate plans are in place for leaders to collect and analyse this information to establish an accurate overview of the performance of classes, cohorts and groups across school.
- The school uses the physical education and sports funding to great effect. The expertise of the sports coach is helping pupils to achieve greater success in physical education. The wealth of extra-curricular activities means that pupils are able to access a range of different sports clubs. Moreover, many of the pupils have had the opportunity to represent their school at a local or regional level.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding to great effect, ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are well supported to achieve their full potential. The school uses its knowledge of each and every pupil to identify how the money can be used to best effect for that pupil, including intensive reading support, breakfast club, music tuition or one-to-one teaching.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors used the findings from the external review recommended at the previous inspection to change their model of governance so that they make a more positive impact on the performance of the school. They have ensured that the governing body now has members with the right mix of skills and experience to provide the correct support and challenge to school leaders.

- Governors have taken much greater responsibility for gathering information about the school's performance. They visit the school frequently, check work in pupils' books and ask insightful questions of senior leaders when given reports and performance data. They also engage well with parents.
- Governors have ensured that the school's finances are well managed, keeping a close eye on how physical education and sports funding, and the pupil premium (additional funding that the school is given for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and pupils who are in the care of the local authority) are used. They have now allocated finance to address the deficiencies in the outdoor provision in the early years.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders undertake thorough checks to assess the suitability of new staff to work with children. Staff are up to date with their training and understand their responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe. The school recently commissioned an extensive audit of its safeguarding practice and is acting on the recommendations to further strengthen its practice. Parents and children are in agreement that children are safe and well cared for. The school supports its most vulnerable pupils well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well. They question the pupils effectively to check their understanding and make sure they use this information to reshape their lesson plans so that, for example, they can tackle misconceptions as they occur.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge means that they are able to provide clear explanations to help their pupils quickly grasp more tricky concepts. They plan activities that engage and enthuse pupils and make connections across the curriculum. Pupils talked enthusiastically about writing tasks, for example when they made a booklet to encourage Anglo-Saxons to move to England and wrote a report about the diet of people in Roman times.
- In some classes, teachers encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and to attempt more challenging tasks than they may previously have done. Pupils enjoy choosing which level of challenge they are going to start with: 'tricky, trickier or trickiest'. They decide when they are ready to move on to the next level. Teachers keep a close eye on pupils to make sure they are making appropriate and timely decisions about their learning so that they make good progress.
- Teachers make sure that all pupils follow the curriculum for their year group. They deploy themselves and teaching assistants well to make sure that all pupils are able to keep up, as well as deepening the learning of the most able pupils.
- Teaching support staff provide highly effective one-to-one and small-group support for pupils who have fallen behind or need to catch up quickly. The excellent communication between this team and the teachers ensures that additional support is put in place quickly. The interventions target individual pupils' needs precisely and, as a result, they make rapid progress.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They carefully track pupils' learning using a range of information to help them plan lessons that are carefully matched to the needs of their class. They are able to pinpoint the gaps in each pupil's learning so that support is put in place to help pupils catch up quickly if they fall behind, or pupils are moved on to new learning when ready. As a result, learning time is used well.
- Most teachers have consistently high expectations across the curriculum. They make sure that work is routinely marked in line with the school's policy and that pupils maintain the same high standards of presentation, handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation in all subjects. They give pupils time to respond to feedback and make improvements to their work. During guided reading sessions most teachers consistently monitor the learning of pupils working independently so that their progress does not slow down. However, leaders do not ensure that all teachers rigorously apply school policies including those relating to behaviour, homework, marking and presentation and, as a result, at times some pupils do not consistently maintain the high standards leaders expect.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff get to know pupils and their families extremely well. The school supports its most vulnerable pupils and their parents and carers, using its strong links with external agencies to provide the help needed to address concerns. Staff develop good relationships with pupils. Pupils who spoke to inspectors all felt confident that they would talk to an adult in school if they had any worries.
- Parents value the regular communication from school, the swift response of staff if they contact school with any concerns and the high level of care the school provides for their children.
- Provision for pupils with additional emotional health and well-being needs supports pupils well so that they continue to be successful in their learning. The school employs a drama group who deliver tailored programmes for both individuals and groups identified by the school. This initiative has made a positive difference to pupils facing significant personal challenges.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school, online and in the local community. They understand exactly what to do if they receive any inappropriate messages through social media. The school recently surveyed pupils about their views on safety in school. In response to some concerns raised, the school council has designed and displayed posters in the corridors to encourage pupils to show more considerate behaviour in these areas when they are congested. Moreover, the school council has made sure that there is more play equipment available at playtimes to make sure pupils have plenty to occupy themselves.
- The school encourages pupils to live healthy lives. The sports coach offers a range of after-school clubs as well as organising activities at lunchtime. The popular 'Change 4 Life' club teaches pupils about how to keep themselves fit and healthy.
- Pupils say that they treat each other with respect, regardless of their race or religion. They say that bullying and the use of derogatory language is rare and dealt with swiftly by the headteacher. This view is supported by the school's own records.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their high standards of attendance and punctuality. The school encourages pupils to get off to a good start each day through the provision of a well-attended, free breakfast club.
- Pupils are polite, considerate and well mannered. They have noticed the improvements in behaviour since the previous inspection. They know the school rules and understand the behaviour system. Pupils appreciate that good behaviour is celebrated through the weekly class 'lucky dips'. Pupils listen attentively to the headteacher in assembly, respond quickly to their teacher's instructions in the classroom and work well with their partners during lessons.
- The overwhelming majority of staff apply the behaviour policy consistently and make sure pupils' behaviour is in line with the high standards expected by leaders. However, a small minority of pupils take the opportunity to indulge in silly behaviour when staff do not follow the policy and accept standards that are lower than the school norm.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- The progress of pupils currently in school is good in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' work in books, teachers' assessment information and observations in lessons show that the majority of pupils make expected progress from their starting points and a good proportion are doing better than this.
- Strong leadership and improvements in the quality of teaching in Years 1, 2 and 3 are securing rapid progress for all groups of pupils, so that the legacy of underperformance is being eliminated. By the end of key stage 1, boys achieve equally well as girls. The proportion of pupils working at and above age-related expectations by the end of Year 2 is now at least in line with national averages in writing as well as reading and mathematics. The most able pupils are challenged to deepen their understanding so that increasing proportions of these pupils are exceeding age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1.
- Current Year 3 pupils have made rapid progress, particularly in writing. As a result, any gaps remaining at the end of key stage 1 have now closed.

- The improvements to the quality of teaching in phonics across the early years and key stage 1, coupled with well-targeted interventions for identified pupils, mean that the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in phonics is now consistently in line with the national average.
- Improvements in writing have also made a positive difference to older pupils' achievement. Good outcomes in 2015 evidenced the impact of improvements made to the teaching of writing, and these have been sustained. Most pupils have rapidly improved their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. As a result, pupils across the school achieve as well in these as in other aspects of writing.
- Mathematics is taught well. The stronger focus than previously on reasoning and problem solving has improved pupil outcomes at the end of both key stages 1 and 2. Progress has accelerated throughout the school so that across all year groups the overwhelming majority of pupils are working at, or above, age-related expectations. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning in their mathematics lessons, particularly the 'tricky challenges' their teachers now set them.
- Pupils are confident that the work their teachers set makes them think hard. For the most able pupils their books as well as observations in lessons evidence the increased level of challenge. As a result, more of these pupils are exceeding age-related expectations in reading and mathematics. In writing, the numbers of younger more able pupils achieving above age-related expectations has noticeably increased this year.
- The school meets the needs of lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities well. These pupils make progress in line with their peers, and teachers' judicious deployment of resources means that most of these pupils are able to study the full curriculum alongside their classmates. High-quality interventions help target specific individual needs so that these pupils' good progress is maintained.
- Pupils who join the school at different points than is usual are helped to settle in quickly so that they rapidly start to make good progress. Pupils who join with no experience of speaking English are well supported to acquire quickly the necessary language to enable them to access the curriculum. These pupils make good progress across the school.
- Leaders make good use of the pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as well as and often better than their peers. They ensure regular school attendance, additional resources in the classroom, and timely, bespoke interventions.
- The teacher in charge of English has worked successfully to develop a passion for reading in children across the school. As a result, pupils are excited by the class books chosen by their teachers and are discerning, confident and fluent readers.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Although leaders have identified the deficiencies in the quality of the outdoor provision, partly due to the deterioration of fixed equipment, they have not acted swiftly and decisively enough. While equipment has been taken out of use, plans have been drawn up, quotes for the works received and monies allocated, leaders have not ensured that children continue to have access to a broad range of high-quality outdoor activities.
- The overwhelming majority of children joining both Nursery and Reception start with skills below those typical for their age. When they join the school, children's skills in reading, writing and mathematics are not as well developed as other aspects such as personal and social skills. This low starting point is particularly acute in boys' writing. Teachers ensure that all pupils get off to a good start and make strong progress across the early years.
- Children who join the school in the Nursery benefit from two years of good-quality provision in the setting that helps them catch up quickly with children nationally. The increasing proportion of children joining in Reception, although they make good progress from their different starting points, are not able to close the considerable gaps, particularly in boys' writing. However, the setting makes sure that children are well prepared for the transition into school and, as a result, almost all pupils reach age-related expectations by the end of Year 1.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants' excellent subject knowledge ensures that the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is highly effective. Children enjoy taking part in the wealth of activities teachers plan and make great strides in their learning. As a result, most of the girls have caught up with their peers nationally and boys have a firm foundation from which to build in Year 1.
- Staff make good use of the online programme to record children's learning day-to-day. Parents speak very positively about feeling involved in their children's learning as they are able to access the

photographs and notes uploaded by staff. The early years team are able to use this information to assess formally how pupils are progressing and use the information well to plan small-group and individual support programmes. However, currently leaders do not make enough use of the data to track the progress of different groups so that they can respond quickly to any emerging issues.

- Parents recognise the good care that staff take of their children. High levels of vigilance, up-to-date training and detailed knowledge of the children and their families ensures that staff keep pupils safe. Children are encouraged to keep themselves healthy through a wealth of fun activities including Zumba and jiu jitsu.
- Teachers help children to acquire positive behaviours for learning very quickly. For example, during the inspection, children were sharing what they had found out about sharks as part of a home-school learning project linked to their topic 'Under the sea'. Children listened carefully to each other as they shared what they had learned about sharks. Children confidently answered the teacher's questions as she checked their understanding. They correctly used the new vocabulary they had learned including 'cold blooded' and 'deadly'. Children thanked each other for sharing their research and were delighted with the stickers they earned for their achievements.

School details

Unique reference number	106204
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10011208

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	430
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Christina McBride
Headteacher	Mr Iain Linsdell
Telephone number	0161 336 4134
Website	www.poplarstreet.tameside.sch.uk
Email address	admin@poplarstreet.tameside.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 March 2014

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- School leaders have received support from a national leader of education since the previous inspection.
- The school's website complies with the 'School Information Regulations 2012'.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning, including joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the national leader of education who has been supporting the school.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning, assessment information and reports on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime and lunch. They also met formally with two groups of pupils to talk about their learning, behaviour and safety. Inspectors made a note of the results of a survey of pupils' views on safety conducted by the school.
- Inspectors heard a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school.
- A range of pupils' books was checked jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents and took note of the 30 responses to Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of staff and also considered the 83 responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Catherine Parker	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Rigby	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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