

# St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Bacup

Tong Lane, Bacup, Lancashire OL13 9LJ

**Inspection dates**

21–22 June 2016

**Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

**This is an inadequate school**

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are low. Too many pupils are working at a level that is below that expected for their age.
- Despite a recent improvement in the proportion of pupils making the progress expected of them, too few do better than this. Progress rates are uneven across the school.
- Gaps in attainment between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally, although closing, are still too wide.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. A legacy of weak teaching in the past and staffing changes have had a significantly negative impact on pupils' learning.
- Some subject leaders are at an early stage of developing their skills.
- Pupils are not challenged enough, particularly the most able.
- Targets and timescales in improvement plans are not precise enough to help leaders and governors fully check the impact of actions taken.
- At times, pupils' attention drifts, particularly when learning lacks challenge. Sometimes their work is untidy and their grammar and spelling are inaccurate.
- Some pupils do not attend regularly enough.
- The recommendations of an external review of governance are still at an early stage of implementation.

**The school has the following strengths**

- The new headteacher has made a rapid impact on most aspects of the school's work.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective. Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school.
- Teachers use good subject knowledge to plan learning that captures the interests of pupils.
- Appointments by governors have strengthened leadership and stabilised staffing.
- Pupils confirm that behaviour has improved this year.
- Children make a good start in early years because of effective support and good teaching.

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to increase pupils' progress and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can do and set work at the right level of challenge, particularly for the most able
  - teachers plan work to tackle the weaknesses in pupils' basic skills in spelling, grammar, punctuation and mathematics
  - pupils present their work neatly and free from careless mistakes.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that improvement plans include measurable targets, so that leaders and governors can precisely judge the impact that the actions have had on pupils' outcomes
  - ensuring that all subject leaders develop the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to contribute fully to school improvement
  - checking closely that the spending of the pupil premium grant helps disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as they can from their starting points
  - developing the assessment system to give leaders and teachers an accurate picture of pupils' outcomes in science and the foundation subjects
  - ensuring that governors provide improved challenge and hold leaders to account.
- Continue to improve pupils' attendance, so that it is consistently at least in line with the national average.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The school was led by a succession of interim headteachers for the two years prior to the current headteacher's appointment. The governing body, supported by the local authority and the Catholic archdiocese, worked hard in seeking a replacement for the previous post holder. However, the post was not filled permanently until September 2015.
- During this period of turbulence in senior leadership, the school also experienced significant turnover in teaching staff. Teaching across the school has been inconsistent and expectations of what pupils can achieve have been too low. As a result, the quality of teaching has not been strong enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. Gaps in learning are evident and too many pupils are working below the standards expected for their age.
- Following her appointment, the headteacher quickly gained an understanding of precisely what the school needs to do to improve. She has taken actions that have had a positive impact. Pupils' progress, which was previously very slow, particularly in reading and mathematics, has improved and in the current Year 5 and Year 6, it is rapid.
- Staff were keen to explain to inspectors the positive impact that the new headteacher has had on morale and the development of a staff team. All those who work in the school are committed to rapidly bringing about improvements.
- The headteacher uses a range of information, including assessments of pupils' performance, to understand the quality of teaching and learning. She has brought about improvements in teaching through a review of the way teachers plan lessons, how they mark pupils' work and how accurately they are able to judge pupils' progress. Training to fill gaps in teachers' subject knowledge has paid dividends.
- Almost all subject leaders are new to their roles. They show willingness to learn and drive improvements in their areas of responsibility. However, some are at an early stage of developing the skills necessary to check on the work of the school.
- School plans identify the correct priorities. However, targets and timescales are not tight enough to enable leaders and governors to precisely measure the impact of the actions taken.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The content of subjects excites and captures pupils' imagination. Improved curriculum content and more stable staffing are having a good impact on how pupils regard learning. The wider range of trips and visitors provided this year has helped widen pupils' horizons beyond their own community. These experiences are having a positive impact on pupils' learning as they provide a stimulus for their written work.
- The school encourages pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through its curriculum. The promotion of British values is planned within the curriculum and is supported by the work of the school council.
- Primary sports funding is targeted at raising the quality of physical education teaching in the school, as well as increasing participation rates in sports activities.
- The local authority has provided significant amounts of valuable support for the school since the previous inspection. This is now reducing as the headteacher and other leaders are demonstrating the capacity to improve the school.
- A very small number of parents responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, during the inspection. The school's own parental questionnaire and parents who spoke to inspectors at the start of the school day were generally positive about the school's new direction and leadership. However, some expressed concerns about the number of headteachers and different teachers that had taught their children recently. They felt that this flux had had a negative impact on behaviour in some classes and on the progress made by their children.
- The headteacher and governors have established clear procedures for inducting new and temporary teachers to the school. Clear guidance sets out leaders' high expectations of all staff and regular checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are in place to ensure that improvements in the quality of teaching are maintained and built on by all permanent and temporary staff.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors responded positively to the outcomes of an external review undertaken following the previous inspection. As a result, the governing body made changes to its membership and the way it works and continues to respond to the outcomes of the review.

- Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching through visits to classrooms. They take part in walks around the school with the headteacher to improve their understanding and they share this with colleagues at governing body meetings. Together with detailed reports provided by the headteacher, these visits help governors to gain a full picture of school life, which they use increasingly well to hold leaders to account.
- Governors now check that performance management systems are fully in place. They are starting to make sure that leaders hold teachers to account for the quality of their work and the impact on pupils' progress.
- Governors keep a check on how additional funding is spent. They are starting to monitor the impact of this spending on disadvantaged pupils more robustly.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are well trained and vigilant. Good systems to support those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable are in place. There are close links with external agencies and parents to support safeguarding, including local authority services.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across the school. Over time, teaching has not always been effective. This is due to a combination of staffing changes and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve having been too low.
- The basic skills of writing and mathematics have not been taught systematically. As a result, teachers, particularly in key stage 2, are trying to make up for lost time and are focusing on things that should have been taught much earlier. Work in pupils' books shows that a greater focus on teaching these basic skills is leading to some success as pupils are now making faster progress. However, teachers do not always plan lessons that rectify the gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge.
- In most classes, pupils are now making expected progress because staffing is more stable and teaching is stronger than in the past. Teachers use their improved knowledge of subjects to plan learning that captures pupils' interests. They regularly provide clear explanations and check pupils' understanding to move learning on. Pupils do their part as they respond positively to the greater effort demanded of them. However, the work given to pupils does not always provide enough challenge, particularly for the most able, and this limits progress.
- Teachers are not routinely expecting high standards of presentation and pupils' work contains careless spelling and grammatical errors.
- The new assessment system for reading, writing and mathematics is now being used throughout the school. It is accompanied by a recording system that enables teachers to have a better understanding of how well groups of pupils and individuals are progressing. Teachers use the assessment information to plan targeted support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those who have underachieved in the past and are at risk of falling further behind.
- The pupil premium grant is spent effectively to meet any social and emotional needs that disadvantaged pupils have. Additional support in class and in individual and group work is beginning to narrow attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. However, there is more to do to close the remaining gaps completely.
- Where teaching has improved significantly, pupils show real enthusiasm for their work. For example, in an English lesson observed in Year 6, pupils maturely argued for and against the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest. They put forward their points of view and listened carefully to each other. Their work was of a high standard and they were reluctant to finish the lesson because they were enjoying learning so much.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

### **requires improvement**

#### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.

- Pupils reported that instances of bullying have reduced this year. There are, however, instances of name-calling using terms such as racist names and the use of 'gay' in a derogatory way. The school is making improvements, but has not yet been able to prevent different types of derogatory language and name-calling from occurring. When it does arise, bullying is dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Warm relationships exist between pupils and staff, and pupils value the care that the adults show for them. They know that, if required, they can turn to a member of staff for help and support.
- Staff meet pupils' social and emotional needs very effectively.
- Leaders and staff are doing a good job of ensuring the well-being of all pupils, including the high proportion who have difficult home lives.
- Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school, for example, as school councillors and play leaders. Some pupils play an active role as school chaplains, who lead assemblies and reflection time for their fellow pupils.
- Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the range of activities and sports provided, which keep them fit. The before- and after-school clubs are well attended.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils do not always take enough pride in their work. Presentation in books can be untidy, and careless spelling and grammatical mistakes creep into pupils' work.
- Occasionally, when teaching fails to engage pupils sufficiently, pupils can become restless and do not concentrate on their work. This sometimes happens when work is too easy or too difficult.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around school. They are polite and welcoming. Their relationships with staff and with one another are good and reflect the school's ethos. Pupils and their parents told inspectors that behaviour has improved since the beginning of the year and school records support this view. The headteacher reviewed the school's policy about behaviour at the start of the year and made sure that all pupils and staff understood the importance of applying the rewards and sanctions fairly.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They know what is expected of them and they try their best to follow the school rules.
- Some pupils, particularly those in key stage 2, expressed their concern about the number of teachers they have had in the last few years. They say that sometimes pupils find it difficult to behave well for new staff and that they worry that new teachers are only going to stay for a short while. Sometimes they find that they have to repeat work that they have already done for another teacher.
- The proportion of pupils who are frequently absent from school has reduced this year and is now below average. Pupils' attendance has also improved, but remains below average.

### **Outcomes for pupils** are inadequate

- Pupils' progress since the previous inspection has been too slow, particularly in reading and mathematics. Results in national tests and teacher assessments have been low for a number of years and pupils have been unprepared for the next stage of their education. This has been the case for pupils moving up through the school and for Year 6 pupils moving into secondary education.
- The new headteacher and governors have a clear focus on bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching and this year their higher expectations have led to some success. In most year groups, pupils' learning, work and assessment information show that the majority of pupils are now making at least expected progress. Increasing numbers of pupils are making accelerated progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6, but not enough to eradicate the underachievement of previous years. As a result, standards remain too low in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups except for pupils in the current Years 1 and 6.
- Too few of the most able pupils are working at levels beyond those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Over time, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils has been slower than that of their peers and gaps in attainment have not closed sufficiently. However, current performance information and inspection evidence show that progress for this group has accelerated this year in reading, writing and mathematics, and gaps have narrowed. Nevertheless, there is more to do to close attainment gaps completely.

- Typically, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make expected progress and a few make good progress.
- Pupils joining the school at other than the usual times settle quickly and are well cared for. They are helped to make at least the progress expected of them and some do better than this from their starting points. However, pupils who join the school at the usual time tend to reach higher standards than those who join the school later.
- The school has focused well on developing early reading skills. In the Year 1 phonics check (linking letters and the sounds they represent), the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard is in line with the national average. Pupils say that they enjoy reading and they like the way their teachers link the books they are reading to curriculum topics.
- School leaders have taken steps to provide pupils with an enriched curriculum to improve their limited vocabulary. As a result, pupils have started to think of interesting words to enliven their written work. Teachers focus on developing pupils' stamina in writing.
- Pupils' performance in mathematics is beginning to benefit from improved teaching of the basic skills and concepts of number and place value. Teachers encourage the use of the appropriate mathematical vocabulary, but too few opportunities are provided at present to encourage pupils to reason and stretch their thinking when they solve problems.

### **Early years provision**

**is good**

- Children join early years with skills and knowledge that are lower, and in many cases much lower, than is typical for their age. This is particularly the case in children's communication, social and emotional development, and in speech and language skills. Some children's self-help skills are very low. They get off to a good start in Nursery and this is built on well in Reception. The proportion entering Year 1 with a good level of development has improved over recent years. Current children's development is close to the national average and they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Good teaching and staffing stability, particularly in Nursery, mean that the early years is currently one of the most effective parts of the school.
- Children make at least typical and often rapid progress from their individual starting points because teaching is planned well and activities are exciting and capture children's interests really well. Behaviour is good in this part of the school. Independence is encouraged and children play and learn happily together in the well-resourced indoor and outdoor areas. Teaching takes good account of individual learning needs and progress is clear from the work that children are producing.
- Leadership in the early years is effective. Checks on how well children are doing are accurate and thorough and take good account of parents' comments about how well children are doing at home.
- Parents are very positive about their children's experiences in the Nursery and Reception classes. They are kept well informed about how well their children are doing. Staff are working closely with those families who sometimes find it difficult to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119662
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012129

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	173
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Diana Doherty
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kathryn Bishop-Horsfield
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 873123
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarysbacup.org">www.stmarysbacup.org</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11–12 March 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupil numbers in some year groups are low. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 are taught in the same class and, until recently, some Year 4 pupils were taught in a mixed-age class with Year 3.
- Most children attend the Nursery classes part time and they attend the Reception class full time. Each year, a number of children join Reception from other or no pre-school settings.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. No pupils currently in the school have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through pupil premium funding is more than double the national average, and is high. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school part-way through their education is high when compared with the national average. Over a third of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 joined the school at other than the usual times.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant changes in staffing. Owing to resignations and instances of long-term staff absence, several classes, particularly those in key stage 2, have been taught by a number of temporary teachers. A stable complement of teaching staff is now in place.
- The school has been led by a number of interim full-time and part-time associate and executive headteachers since September 2013. The substantive headteacher took up her post in September 2015. An additional assistant headteacher joined the staff the week before the inspection.
- Most of the members of the governing body have joined the school since the previous inspection.

- The school is part of a soft federation with the Rochdale Catholic SIA Federation, and a member of the local cluster of schools.
- Governors provide a breakfast club and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.
- The school meets the requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2015 to determine whether the school met 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.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed learning in classes and small-group activities. Some of these observations were conducted with the headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their work. They listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills. Inspectors talked to pupils about the books they had enjoyed and those that they are currently reading. Inspectors took note of displays around the school and the learning taking place outdoors.
- Inspectors talked with pupils informally as they played at breaktimes, visited the dining hall at lunchtime and observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around school. They met formally with three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors met with three governors. They spoke to two representatives of the local authority and the headteacher from a local school who has been supporting St Mary's. They also met with members of school staff. An inspector also spoke with a representative of the diocese on the telephone.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day. There were too few responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, to be analysed, but inspectors examined the school's most recent survey of parents' views. Eight returns to the staff questionnaire were taken into account.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including information about pupils' progress and attainment, school improvement plans and external views of the school. Inspectors also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding completed by school staff.

## Inspection team

Lyn Pender, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jennifer Platt

Ofsted Inspector

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