

St John Southworth Roman Catholic Primary School, Nelson

Lomeshaye Road, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 0DQ

Inspection dates

6–7 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have been relentless in their efforts to secure strong rates of progress for pupils. The school is well placed to raise pupils' achievement further so that their outcomes rapidly reach 'good'.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching have resulted in training and some changes of staff. Teaching is now good and more pupils are now making good progress.
- There has been substantial progress in pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they make in Year 1.
- Teachers encourage good behaviour and have positive relationships with pupils.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They visit the school regularly to carry out learning walks to monitor progress.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They welcome the good level of information they receive and feel that school has a friendly atmosphere.
- Pupils' conduct around school is good. They are polite and considerate, especially to adults they meet. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe.
- Children in the early years are confident and willing to engage adults in conversation. They benefit from well-planned activities that help them make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is still some variability in the progress made by pupils in different classes.
- While they are sometimes stretched in their learning, high levels of challenge for the most able pupils are not a consistent feature of teaching.
- Teachers' feedback is not always effective in helping pupils to understand how to improve their work.
- Teachers do not focus strongly enough on pupils' presentation and handwriting, so pupils do not consistently take pride in the appearance of their work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by all teachers:
 - consistently providing activities for the most able pupils that challenge them effectively and allow them to work at greater depth
 - developing pupils' handwriting and presentation so that they more regularly demonstrate good attitudes to learning by showing pride in their work.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - focusing the work of senior and middle leaders on supporting teachers to secure more rapid progress for all pupils, particularly the most able and those in key stage 2
 - providing more consistent feedback, in accordance with the school's policy, so that all pupils know how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and governors have a clear and realistic view of the school. They recognise that outcomes for pupils require improvement. The headteacher and other senior leaders have been relentless in their efforts to secure stronger rates of progress for pupils. The school is well placed to continue these improvements.
- The headteacher, with the full support of the governing body, has successfully challenged underperformance among teaching staff since his arrival in the spring term of 2015. There has been unavoidable upheaval in staffing as a result of this process, but the school is now reaping the rewards of the improvement in teaching that has been achieved.
- The systems for managing teachers' performance have been effective in securing improvements in the quality of teaching so that pupils are now making faster progress. Teachers' targets reflect the teachers' standards and are linked to the school's improvement plan. Teachers report that they feel well supported and that plenty of training is provided.
- School leaders have put in place a comprehensive programme to check the quality of teaching and provide training where it is needed. As a result, there has been particularly strong improvement in the teaching of English and mathematics.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils frequently use skills learned in English and mathematics and apply them to other subjects. There is good development of appropriate knowledge and skills in science and other subjects. For example, in history, pupils can make comparisons between the past and the present, while in science they can devise an investigation to test the viscosity of different liquids.
- Subject leaders, especially in English and mathematics, are effective and have good overviews of pupils' attainment and progress in their subjects. Leaders of other subjects focus in their checks on ensuring that pupils make secure progress and on identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. Subject leaders contribute effectively to school improvement planning.
- There is effective communication between the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and class teachers to ensure that teaching appropriately supports pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and the most able. Leaders are making effective use of pupil premium funding to improve outcomes and provide additional opportunities for eligible pupils.
- The school's marking and feedback policy gives clear direction to teachers on how to give feedback that enables pupils to improve their work. Not all teachers apply the policy fully; consequently, not all pupils get the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.
- The extra money provided by the government for primary physical education and sport has been used well to support pupils' involvement in sport and to build up confidence and skills of teaching staff. Pupils take part in an increasing number of competitive activities, including football, netball and gymnastics. Staff receive coaching in sports including tag rugby and short tennis. The school achieved the Sainsbury's Bronze Award for school sports in the academic year 2014/15.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is strong. Collective worship and religious education lessons play an important role in this, but school leaders organise other activities to support pupils' development. Examples include a residential outdoor and adventure visit every year, regular opportunities for pupils to raise money for good causes and charities and an exciting visit of a local Olympic athlete to open the school's new 'trim trail' and climbing wall.
- The school promotes fundamental British values well. Pupils understand democracy and the rule of law and some children have created board games which involve debating various issues connected with these values. In conversations with inspectors, pupils spoke with conviction about the importance of tolerating others' beliefs and views, and of respect for others.
- Leaders promote reading and writing well across the school and have introduced engaging new features, such as the 'hall of fame' display in each classroom for good examples of writing and 'reading champions' for the best readers of the week. They have also restocked and reorganised the school library, so that it is now regularly used by pupils.
- The local authority and the diocese provide effective support and advice to secure improvement in the school.
- A large majority of the parents who responded to the online survey 'Parent View', and all of those who spoke to inspectors directly, were very positive about the school. They speak highly of the friendly

atmosphere, with one parent describing it as 'fantastic'. They feel that the school keeps them well informed and they appreciate the work that is done to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

■ **The governance of the school**

- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They regularly visit the school to monitor progress. The knowledge and understanding governors gain feed into the school's improvement plan.
 - The governing body challenges leaders and holds them to account strongly. This is borne out by minutes of meetings, which indicate that governors ask well-focused questions.
 - Governors are aware that their section of the website is currently not compliant. The governing body is taking action to amend this.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school communicates effectively with parents about how to keep children safe. Concerns are reported promptly, acted upon and pursued appropriately. Safeguarding training for staff is up to date and regular. Training takes place yearly and as needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Leaders have taken effective action since the previous inspection to improve the quality of teaching. Consequently, pupils are now typically making strong progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding of English and mathematics.
- In all classes, teachers encourage good behaviour and have positive relations with pupils. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. On occasions, however, these good attitudes do not show through in the quality of pupils' presentation and a sense of pride in their work.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and predominantly plan and manage lessons well so that pupils remain interested and busy. There are very few delays to learning through low-level disruption by pupils. Teachers use praise to encourage pupils; this strengthens their self-esteem and contributes well to their spiritual development. Questioning by teachers and support staff often challenges pupils to think about their learning more deeply and to have a go at overcoming difficulties by using their existing knowledge.
- Teachers generally plan for the most able pupils well by providing them with a level of challenge that matches their ability. For example, the most able pupils in Year 1 are given mathematics problems involving careful measuring in centimetres and are not simply finding answers to calculations, as this allows them to work at greater depth.
- Challenge for the most able pupils is inconsistent, though. Sometimes teachers give them work that is harder than the work other pupils receive, but is still too easy for them. When this happens, pupils miss out on the chance to work at greater depth. In mathematics, for example, the most able are sometimes presented with work that does not allow them to grapple with more difficult concepts.
- Good teaching in other subjects means pupils also make good progress overall and make use of skills learned in English and mathematics. In science, pupils develop their knowledge and skills well in a well-planned progression of topics. They show they can devise scientific tests and write reports that contain well-argued conclusions. In history, pupils used their reading skills to explore secondary historical sources to find out facts about the ancient Olympic Games.
- Support for different groups of pupils is effective. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and gaps between their attainment and that of others are closing. Staff recognise, however, that current progress has not yet brought attainment close enough to national figures for other pupils.

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 say that playtimes are enjoyable and safe. They know which parts of the playground they are allowed to use and respect timetables and rules around using equipment such as the 'trim trail'.
- In conversations with inspectors, pupils made it clear they know the risks associated with the internet. They recall well, for example, termly presentations from their teachers about internet safety and are

given constant reminders through prominent displays reminding them how to stay safe online.

- Pupils report that bullying in all its forms is rare, but they know what to do if it happens, or if they are upset about any other issue, such as the use of derogatory language or aggressive behaviour. They know to tell their teacher or the designated adult in school who provides welfare and support about their concerns. They say that, when teachers need to tackle such issues, they do so quickly and effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. At breaktimes they play well together and are cooperative with routines for going back into school afterwards.
- Pupils' conduct around school is good. They are usually polite and considerate, especially to adults they meet, and they are clear about the expectations for moving around the building.
- Pupil's behaviour in class is generally positive in all year groups. While teachers make their expectations of behaviour clear, pupils sometimes lose their concentration and there can be an occasional loss of learning time. Teachers and support staff are quick to intervene, however, and pupils come back on task promptly. There is also some inconsistency in the pride that pupils take in their work, as there are some books with less careful presentation and handwriting.
- Exclusions of pupils from school for poor behaviour are rare. When they do occur, leaders manage them well, so repetition is avoided.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Leaders recognise that the standards attained by pupils by the end of key stages 1 and 2 have not been high enough in recent times. In 2015, floor standards were not reached. They are taking determined actions to bring about improvements. Pupils are now making faster progress, but this is not consistently good for all pupils in all year groups.
- Most-able pupils are not challenged sufficiently well. There are examples of good practice when these pupils are given tasks requiring them to apply their problem-solving and reasoning skills, but these demanding levels of challenge are not a consistent feature of teaching and so the most able pupils do not all achieve the high standards they should.
- In 2016, the percentages of pupils in Year 6 reaching the expected standard in reading, mathematics and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling were below average. The percentage achieving the expected standard in writing, however, was much closer to the national figure. This year group has experienced disruption for some time, but leaders have now stabilised staffing, which has produced much better progress for these pupils. Nevertheless, they have not made sufficient progress from their starting points during their time in the school.
- Pupils in Year 3 have similarly experienced some disruption to their education and they too have not made enough progress, although recent improvements to teaching mean that their progress is now secure. For example, they have recently moved from straightforward work on place value earlier in the year to using a formal written method to multiply accurately two-digit numbers by one-digit numbers.
- Pupils in Years 4 and 5 have made better progress than pupils in the other two year groups in key stage 2. Pupils in Year 5, for example, use increasingly adventurous vocabulary in their writing, describing characters in their writing as 'relieved' or 'petrified'. Overall, however, there has been variability over time in the progress made by pupils throughout key stage 2. The actions taken by leaders to improve teaching are leading to more rapid progress now being made.
- Throughout the school, pupils are typically making much better progress from their starting points in English and mathematics than was previously the case. Their work shows more rapid development of knowledge, skills and understanding recently.
- Pupils in key stage 1 have seen more consistent benefits from the school's drive to improve teaching. Pupils in Year 2 made good progress in 2016.
- The improvements brought about by leaders have shown through most strongly in the substantial progress made by pupils in Year 1 in the phonics screening check, which assesses their understanding of letters and the sounds they make. In 2016, for example, nine out of ten of pupils achieved the expected standard in phonics, a rise from two thirds in 2015.
- Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to apply skills learned in English and mathematics in other subjects. In science, for example, they write reports on investigations they have devised and use mathematical skills to take measurements, such as timings, and record them.

- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and are making good progress from their starting points.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years leader has an accurate picture of standards in the Reception Year. She organises the provision well and provides the children with a bright and inviting learning environment that supports their development of the key skills in reading, writing and mathematics that they need for Year 1. This includes the outdoor learning area, where children have the chance to practise their learning in different contexts, such as a classroom, a zoo or a restaurant.
- Children in the early years are confident and willing to engage adults in conversation. They give clear explanations in answer to questions beginning with 'why' or 'what' and can use problem-solving and reasoning skills in their work with numbers. They show a good level of independence in their work and they are often engrossed in their activities, showing strong spiritual development and good attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is good.
- Children are confident to read and they use their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make well. For example, one child read 'sea-lion' with understanding in connection with a task about animals. Others read out simple sentences about animals that the teacher has helped them to write.
- Children enter the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. A number of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are identified quickly and, following liaison with parents and external agencies, support is put in place. As a result, these children make good progress from their starting points.
- Children are kept safe because of effective policies and procedures that all members of staff understand and use. If staff have any concerns about a child, they report them immediately to the designated leader and the concerns are recorded and followed up appropriately.
- There are good relationships between home and school. The children's 'learning journeys' are used as a useful way of communication between parents and staff.
- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are supported effectively and make good progress compared with other pupils.
- Nearly six out of 10 current children attained a good level of development in 2016. While lower than last year's figure, this represents good progress from their starting points. Nevertheless, leaders recognise there is a gap between the attainment of boys and girls.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 119655 |
| Local authority | Lancashire |
| Inspection number | 10012128 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 5–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 210 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Father Brian Murphy |
| Headteacher | Neil Gurman |
| Telephone number | 01282 613906 |
| Website | www.st-johnsouthworth.lancs.sch.uk |
| Email address | bursar@st-johnsouthworth.lancs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6–7 March 2014 |

Information about this school

- St John Southworth Roman Catholic Primary School is slightly smaller than average in size for a primary school.
- The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language are well above the national averages.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support in school for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average. The percentage of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through pupil-premium funding is about the same as the national average. The pupil premium is extra money from the government to support pupils identified as being from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 2.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the terms of office of members of the governing body on its website.
- There have been many changes in the teaching staff since the new headteacher arrived in the spring term of 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations of learning in lessons in all classes of the school. Two of these were joint observations between the headteacher and the lead inspector. The headteacher was also present at inspector team meetings.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, minutes of meetings of the governing body, reports of visits by local authority advisers and other external support, and records connected with the safeguarding of children.
- Inspectors had discussions and conversations with members of staff, governors, representatives of the local authority and the diocese, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors analysed pupils' writing and mathematics as well as their work in other subjects. They also examined the work of children in the early years.
- Inspectors also evaluated responses received through Parent View (Ofsted's online survey).

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

Keith Wright

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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