

St Stephen and All Martyrs' CofE School, Lever Bridge

Radcliffe Road, Bolton, Lancashire BL2 1NZ

Inspection dates

6–7 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
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	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not sustained the good quality of education identified in the last inspection. All areas, apart from early years provision, have declined and now require improvement.
- Leaders and governors have an inaccurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have not identified the areas most in need of improvement nor drawn up effective plans to bring about improvements.
- The headteacher is not ambitious enough for the school and has not provided it with clear direction and leadership to raise standards.
- The governors have not held the headteacher and the school sufficiently to account for pupils' underperformance.
- The school does not have clear targets for raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- The assessment of pupils' progress does not take place within a clearly defined framework.
- Pupils have not made the progress of which they are capable, and have not been consistently prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Staff absences and changes have detracted from the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils' attendance has been below average. It is better now but the recent improvements are not consistent within or across year groups.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed senior and middle leaders have clear aspirations to improve the school and they have the capacity to help bring this about.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides pupils with a good range of interesting activities in lessons and also after school.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is strong.
- The pupils are polite and relate well to each other, to staff and to visitors to the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the early years is good and the setting is well managed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that:
 - the headteacher provides strong leadership and direction for the school, based on a clear vision and the highest aspirations for the pupils
 - leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's weaknesses as well as its strengths
 - clear priorities for improvement are identified which take full account of published information on the school's performance in relation to other schools nationally
 - a clear overall school development plan is drawn up which identifies precise targets for improvement, clear actions to bring them about within a specific period of time and precise measures to assess whether the stated goals have been achieved
 - future plans reflect the highest aspirations for pupils of all abilities, to ensure that they make the progress of which they are capable and are prepared well for the next stage of their education
 - governors analyse school performance accurately and hold the headteacher and staff rigorously to account.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - there is stability of staffing
 - there are effective contingency plans in place to ensure that any further turbulence in staffing does not have a detrimental effect on pupils' performance
 - there are precise targets for pupils' attainment and progress, and that all assessment of teaching and learning is related closely to those targets and takes place within a clearly defined framework.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of the leadership may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this may be improved. This should be conducted by a different agency from the one that conducted the previous review of governance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have failed to sustain the good quality of education identified in the last inspection report. With the exception of early years provision, all areas have declined and now require improvement.
- In evaluating the school, the leaders have taken too little account of the weaknesses identified in the published analyses of its performance. As a result, they have been too optimistic and have not identified clear priorities for development. There is no coherent, overall improvement plan for the school. The action plans for individual subjects are little more than wish lists. They do not indicate precisely how much improvement is to be made and over what period of time. It is unclear how, when and by whom success in achieving the stated goals will be measured.
- The school checks on pupils' progress. However, because of the lack of targets, it is impossible to gauge whether the progress made is sufficient. It is not surprising, therefore, that pupils' progress has been significantly below average for the last four years. Although the scores in national tests have generally been in line with or, in some instances, above national averages, they are not as high as the pupils are capable of achieving.
- The school has recently extended the senior leadership team to draw on a wider range of expertise. It is also strengthening the middle leadership team. The work that has already been done by these new post holders bodes well for the future. The headteacher has rightly devolved responsibilities to his colleagues. However, he has not maintained an overview of developments. He is very open to suggestions for improvement and has responded readily to the advice from external consultants. However, he has not been ambitious enough for the school and has not provided it with clear direction and leadership.
- The great majority of the parents who spoke to the lead inspector were complimentary about the school, as were the pupils. However, of the 32 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, almost a fifth said that they would not recommend the school to others. A similar proportion said that they do not think the school is well led and managed.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. The recently appointed curriculum coordinator has brought clarity and coherence to its organisation. The deputy headteacher monitors provision carefully to ensure that all the requirements of the national curriculum are met, and that pupils also have the opportunity to extend their learning through additional research and enquiry. Each teacher is responsible for a subject area. This ensures that everyone has the opportunity to gain leadership and management experience.
- The wide range of opportunities to reflect, to contribute to the leadership of the school and to take part in a wide range of additional activities ensures that pupils develop well spiritually, morally, socially and culturally.

- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well organised by a well-qualified and experienced coordinator whose work drew particular praise from parents who spoke to the lead inspector. Special educational needs funding is used effectively.

Governance

- The governors have not been sufficiently stringent in evaluating the school's performance. They have relied too heavily on the headteacher's self-evaluation which they have accepted uncritically and without setting it against the information from published data. Therefore, they have an inaccurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governors pay regular visits to the school, look at work and report on their findings. However, these are not related to any specific targets or clear directions for improvement and are, therefore, of limited usefulness.
- The governing body does not have clear timescales for reviewing its policies. As a result, some of them are out of date. There are also several omissions from the website. These were not identified by leaders and governors until they were pointed out by inspectors. The missing information includes records of attendance at any governors' meeting held after February 2016.
- The pupil premium policy is up to date and the school is tracking the performance of disadvantaged pupils. However, the information is not set against any explicit targets. Therefore, although the pupils might be making progress, there is no means of knowing whether they are making as much progress as they could or the school expects of them. A weakness in provision for disadvantaged pupils is the lack of personal education plans for those who are looked after. Again, this was not identified by leaders or governors until it was pointed out by inspectors.
- The school uses additional funding for primary physical education and sports to provide pupils with a range of relevant activities. The information on the website indicates what these activities are and the rates of pupils' participation. Once again, a lack of targets makes it impossible to assess the extent to which the school has achieved its intentions.
- The governance of the school has already been the subject of an external review. Despite this, there are still weaknesses in governance. Therefore, a further review is recommended.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The random sample of pupils who met with the lead inspector said that they all feel safe in school and on the way to and from school. They know whom to contact if they have any worries and are confident that they would receive the help they needed. They said that there is very little bullying in the school and that, if it does happen, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on the road and near water and railways because they are taught to do so by visitors to the school and through taking part in specific projects run by experts. They are all taught to swim and they receive training in first aid from St John Ambulance. They know how to keep themselves safe when

using websites and social media because they and their parents receive regular advice and training from the governor who has lead responsibility for safeguarding. The school's website includes a range of very useful information on e-safety.

- The safeguarding policy has recently been updated and takes account of current legislation and national guidelines, including what to do in the case of suspected female genital mutilation, forced marriage and sexual exploitation of a child by an adult or another young person. It also includes guidance on preventing children from becoming involved in terrorism. The school has an intimate care policy which is currently being updated to make it specific to the school.
- The school has robust systems for checking on the suitability of adults to work with children. The leaders, governors and staff have completed the requisite training in safeguarding and know what to do if they are concerned about the safety of a child.
- Posters, prominently displayed around the school, advise parents and pupils what they should do and whom they should contact if they have safeguarding concerns. The Childline number is published at several points in the corridors.
- Access to the school and its grounds is carefully controlled. The staff have worked closely with the police to minimise the risk to pupils from hazardous car parking on the road outside the school.
- The school works effectively with external agencies to support families that need additional help.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- For a variety of reasons, the school has experienced a number of staff changes over the last three years. One class, for example, had three different teachers in one year and the school has not been able to secure the same supply teachers to cover other absences. As a result, there has been a lack of continuity in many pupils' learning. Measures have been put in place to support the classes that have been hardest hit, but there is a long way to go to compensate for the historic underperformance of some pupils.
- Staff attendance is being monitored carefully and there has been a significant improvement of late. The quality of the teaching varies between subjects, as the school's own figures on pupils' current performance show.
- Most learning is well planned. Teachers give pupils the opportunity to extend their knowledge and to apply their previous learning to new contexts. Pupils are encouraged to examine their own work critically and to identify ways of improving it, for example by using their knowledge of grammar to produce more sophisticated sentences. Pupils of all abilities, but particularly the most able, rise to these challenges.
- The teachers make good use of a range of resources, including technology, to capture the pupils' interests. The teachers and teaching assistants work well together and use their expertise to provide appropriate support for pupils of all levels of ability.
- The quality of teachers' questioning is inconsistent. Too often, teachers rely on answers volunteered by the pupils and do not have effective strategies for checking on the understanding of pupils who are less forthcoming. They miss opportunities to use

supplementary questions to help pupils extend their ideas or to identify and correct errors and misunderstandings.

- The teachers have effective strategies for supporting the few pupils who have particular difficulties with behaviour and concentration. However, pupils sometimes lose concentration during activities that go on for a long time.
- The leaders do not set subject targets or targets for specific groups of pupils until the end of the autumn term. This is despite the fact that they have data from previous years. Therefore, although staff conduct regular reviews of pupils' progress, these take place without a clear framework. Staff can tell how much progress pupils have made but not whether they have made enough progress. The school's main concern has been with the levels that pupils are expected to reach at a particular age, with little focus on developing greater depth of learning. As a result, pupils are not being challenged to make the progress of which they are capable, and are not being prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- Teachers apply the school's assessment policy consistently.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The pupils relate well to each other, to teachers and other staff, and to any visitors to the school. They are happy to talk about their work and the life of the school, and are confident and relaxed when doing so. In discussions, they listen to each other's points of view and take turns to contribute. The youngest pupils are also happy to wait for their turn and work well with each other in lessons. Older pupils help younger pupils and, in lessons and the playground, boys and girls cooperate well with each other. The pupils report that there is very little bullying or name-calling in the school. The rare incidents that do occur are dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Pupils take pride in their appearance and their work. Most of them keep their books tidy, although the most able boys do not consistently ensure that their handwriting and presentation are as neat as they could be. They respect their environment and the many colourful displays around the school are in very good condition.
- The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their spiritual development is enhanced through the close connections with the local church. Pupils also learn about other faiths. For example, they were recently involved in celebrating the Hindu festival of Diwali. Pupils have also visited a local mosque as part of their study of Islam. Through their work in geography, they study a range of cultures, as is illustrated by the very attractive and informative display of their recent study of Zambia. Their knowledge of the world is further enhanced through sharing their own experiences, for example through producing an interesting display, 'Where in the world have you been?' indicating the countries visited by members of the school.
- Pupils have considerable opportunities to contribute to the leadership of the school. For example, every member of Year 6 has a specific responsibility for an aspect of school

life. The head girl and head boy also belong to this year group.

- Opportunities for pupils to develop their artistic skills and experiences include working with visiting musicians and attendance at the 'Crafty kids club' that takes place before and after school. Their cultural understanding is further developed through visits to museums and art galleries.
- A noteworthy aspect of the school is the focus placed on developing pupils' understanding of the role of women in society. For example, in science lessons, they learn not only about Isaac Newton but also about the work of the anthropologist Jane Goodall and the palaeontologist Mary Anning. This work includes visiting a 'dinosaur dig'.
- The school offers a wide range of sporting activities, including athletics, boxing, martial arts, dance/drama, football, gymnastics, archery, roller skating, basketball, cricket and cross-country running. The school's records show increasing participation in such activities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school. They are polite to staff and to visitors and even the youngest will open doors for others and stand back to let them through. They relate well to each other in the playground and are quick to respond to instructions from lunchtime and playground supervisors.
- For the most part, pupils respond to the lessons with interest and enthusiasm. Occasionally, pupils are unable to concentrate for longer periods of time. This does not lead to any disruption but it does not advance the pupils' learning. When asked by the lead inspector what one improvement they wish to be made to the school, several pupils said that they would welcome fewer interruptions to lessons by their classmates. When working in pairs in lessons, some pupils are content to let their partners do most of the work.
- Attendance has been a concern for the school. In 2015, absence rates were above average and in the worst 10% of maintained schools nationally for boys, pupils entitled to free school meals and pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. In 2016, persistent absence was in the worst 10% of schools nationally, again for boys, disadvantaged pupils and some pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attendance this year has improved and, since September, has been just below average. However, the summaries published in the headteacher's weekly bulletins to parents show that, over the term, there have been considerable inconsistencies between and within year groups. The school's criteria for determining whether absences are authorised or unauthorised are not applied consistently.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over the last four years, pupils have not made enough progress between the ages of seven and 11. Every year from 2013 to 2015, overall progress was significantly below the national average. In 2015, the school was in the lowest 10% of all maintained

schools nationally in terms of the progress of all pupils in reading, the progress of boys and disadvantaged pupils in writing, the progress of girls in mathematics, and the progress of pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities in reading and mathematics. In 2016, progress was stronger in writing and mathematics but, in reading, it was again in the lowest 10% of schools nationally, especially for pupils of middle ability. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils was significantly below average in reading, writing and mathematics.

- The standards achieved by 11-year-olds in national tests have fluctuated but have been generally in line with or above the national averages. However, because of variable progress, these standards are not as high as the pupils are capable of achieving.
- The standards achieved by seven-year-olds have been broadly in line with and, in some instances, above national averages. However, in 2016, they were well below the national averages for disadvantaged pupils.
- The school's figures indicate that, in most year groups, the pupils currently at the school are on track to achieve the standards expected of their age by the end of the year. However, because of disrupted teaching in the past, standards in Year 5 are low, especially in writing and mathematics.
- The standard of the work in books supports the school's view. In mathematics, the pupils are working in line with expectations. For example, pupils in Year 2 are able to find systematic ways of solving a range of problems, with the most able pupils being challenged to explore concepts in greater depth. In Year 6, pupils are able to apply their prior knowledge to new contexts and to extend it through tackling a range of challenging tasks that also develop their resilience. The indications are that the recent improvements in mathematics are set to continue.
- In English, pupils across the school show a developing command of punctuation and spelling, with the most able pupils being given additional challenges, particularly in the use of more extended vocabulary and complex grammatical constructions.
- Displays in the corridors include reference to the use of mathematics in the workplace and challenges for pupils to be the first to find the answers to mathematical problems of increasing difficulty. Beyond this, however, the opportunities to apply mathematical skills in a range of contexts are limited. In the topic books, the only examples were bar graphs comparing different patterns of travelling to and from school. Opportunities for extended writing are also limited. Too often, pupils of all abilities are asked to write short, almost identical, summaries of an aspect of history or science, for example. Even when there are opportunities to write more extended pieces, the work of the most able pupils is not very different in quality from that of pupils of middle ability.
- Standards in reading declined last year to below the minimum expected standards. Therefore, the school is putting additional emphasis on this. The most able pupils who were heard reading did so with a good level of fluency and expression, although they sometimes stumbled over words. The least able pupils did not have secure strategies for deciphering unfamiliar words and paid little attention to punctuation, with the result that they tended to run one sentence or paragraph into the next and lost the meaning of what they were reading.
- The school anticipates that 83% of Year 1 pupils will reach the expected level in the

phonics screening check next summer. This is an improvement on 77% in 2016. The indications are that current pupils are on track to fulfil the school's expectations.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years setting is led by a very experienced and effective leader who knows her subject well. She has succeeded in creating a cohesive team that works very closely together. The staff take part in the training programme for the whole school in order to develop their expertise and understanding not only of the early years but of education across key stages 1 and 2.
- The children enter the setting from a range of nurseries, pre-school settings and childminders. In these circumstances, it is difficult to ensure consistency in the data on children's abilities on entry. With the help of the local authority, the setting has been able to ensure the accuracy of its own assessments, which show that the majority of children enter below the level typical for their age. This is mainly because they score less well in communication, speaking and listening, writing and understanding of the world. The staff place additional emphasis on these areas. As a result, more of the children who entered in September are now in line with expectation. The indications are that the children in the current cohort are on track to achieve at least in line with the national average, as they did in 2016. Therefore, they are being well prepared for Year 1.
- The staff work very effectively with parents to help them prepare their children for entry into the setting. The monthly stay-and-play days are also valuable in helping fathers as well as mothers to learn how the setting operates, so that they can provide relevant additional support for their children at home.
- The quality of teaching in the early years is good. The teaching of mathematics and phonics is very effective, although occasionally the pace of some activities is too slow to ensure rapid progress by all pupils, particularly the most able. The teachers know the children well and provide them with stimulating activities across all learning areas. Teachers and teaching assistants collaborate well with each other in the planning and organisation of learning activities. The setting is well resourced, both indoors and outdoors, and the children are able to move easily between areas of learning.
- The children have a very secure understanding of the routines that they are expected to follow. This was very clearly illustrated when the children reminded the inspector that she would have to wear a yellow band before she could sit in the home corner because this ensured that there were not too many people there at any one time.
- The safeguarding arrangements in the early years setting are effective. The staff have been appropriately trained. This includes training in paediatric first aid. The site is secure, and there are strict protocols and checks to ensure that children are only collected by people known to the school.

School details

Unique reference number	105217
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10024451

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Balcer
Headteacher	Michael Cummins
Telephone number	01204 333 155
Website	www.ssam.bolton.sch.uk
Email address	cumminsm@ssam.bolton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about attendance at governors' meetings, policies on safeguarding and the pupil premium.
- The school met the government's floor standards for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6 in 2015.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average.
- The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is smaller than average.

- The proportion of pupils entering or leaving the school at other than the usual times is lower than average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed learning in classes. This included joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their work.
- The lead inspector talked to parents as they brought their children to school. He also examined the 32 responses to Parent View.
- The lead inspector met the vice-chair of the governing body, the chair of the human resources committee, and the chair of the teaching and learning committee. He also spoke to representatives of the Liverpool diocese and the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with eight pupils chosen at random from Years 3 to 6.
- The inspectors also spoke to pupils in lessons, in the corridors and the playground.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and minutes of governors' meetings.
- The inspectors also scrutinised documents relating to standards, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Aelwyn Pugh, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Diane Palin	Ofsted Inspector
Saeeda Ishaq	Ofsted Inspector

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