

Highfield St Matthew's CofE Primary School

Billinge Road, Pemberton, Wigan, Lancashire WN3 6BL

Inspection dates

23 May and 7–8 June 2017

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

- The progress of some pupils in reading and mathematics is too slow. This is particularly apparent in key stage 2.
- While there have been improvements this academic year, standards of teaching are not yet consistently good.
- Leaders have an over-generous view of the standards of teaching. Their checks on the quality of teaching require extra rigour.
- Governors do not robustly hold school leaders to account by challenging the information that is presented to them.
- The school's systems for assessing pupils' work and helping them with the next steps in their learning are in their infancy. At the moment, they are not accurate enough.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge the most able pupils in all classes. As a result, they do not always make the progress that they are capable of.
- Some lessons are affected by low-level disruptive behaviour. This means that time is not always used well for learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The teaching of early reading and phonics is good. Teachers' subject knowledge assists in ensuring good progress.
- Children in the early years receive a good start to their education. They learn well and are well prepared for Year 1 by a conscientious team of teachers and support staff.
- Progress in writing, especially in Year 6, is showing improvement this year.
- Leaders ensure a broad and balanced range of sporting and extra-curricular activities for all pupils and manage associated funding well.
- The school provides good care and guidance for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school as it goes through a period of change. They are passionate about the school's development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact that leaders have on pupils' progress by:
 - further developing systems for assessment and feedback, so that judgements are accurate, and assisting in targeting pupils' needs more precisely
 - developing greater accuracy in judgements on teaching quality, thus assisting teachers to improve their practice so that all teaching is consistently good
 - ensuring that the pace of improvement quickens for pupils, especially those most able, in maths and reading at key stage 2.
- Improve the effectiveness of governance by:
 - ensuring that governors ask searching questions about the progress of pupils and the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Further improve teaching, especially at key stage 2, so that it is consistently good across the school by:
 - improving the standards of questioning and feedback to pupils to gain more accurate information about pupils' current attainment
 - providing pupils with more appropriate work for their abilities and prior attainment and giving them the time to develop this learning in more depth
 - making improvements to the overall presentation of pupils' work and raising the expectations of behaviour so that it is consistently good across the school.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- In 2016, standards for pupils in reading and mathematics in key stage 2 dropped significantly below the national averages. School leaders and governors reacted quickly to what they felt were disappointing results and, led by the school's respected and committed headteacher, they have worked hard to make necessary improvements. However, this effort has not yet led to consistently good progress and teaching across the school, especially in key stage 2.
- Efforts to check on the quality of teaching have met with some success, especially for pupils in Year 6. However, in other parts of the school, leaders have an over-generous view of both the standards of teaching and the rates of pupils' progress.
- The systems that the school employs to assess pupils are not yet fully understood by staff and, as a result, lead to inaccuracies. The progress of pupils in reading and mathematics does not match the assessments carried out by teachers. These are subsequently used by leaders to inform strengths and weaknesses and therefore give a flawed picture of how well pupils are progressing.
- Though the school has detailed plans for development, the link between actions and outcomes for groups of pupils, such as the most able pupils, is unclear. Similarly, information used to evaluate the school's own view of its strengths and weaknesses is not fully accurate.
- Senior and middle leaders, some of whom are relatively new to the school, are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. However, their work has yet to have a consistent impact on improving standards across the school.
- The most disadvantaged pupils are making enough progress to help them to catch up with their peers. This is partly because the additional funds provided for these pupils are being used effectively.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are catered for skilfully. There is good individual and group support for these children, which is planned and delivered well. As a result of this, and the effective use of funding, they make good progress.
- Leaders have a clear vision for the use of the sports funding, targeting a good proportion of it towards universal swimming tuition for Year 4. As a result, all pupils are able to swim 25 metres by the end of the year. Healthy lifestyle clubs and a range of dance and sporting activities are also prioritised, exemplifying the school's commitment to physical well-being.
- Leaders and governors are committed to an interesting and balanced curriculum. This results in regular trips and visits, which link in with learning in the classroom. A range of extra-curricular clubs are on offer for all pupils in addition to regular cultural and artistic events. Consequently, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced well.
- Safety is made a high priority and pupils and parents are unanimous in praising the school's efforts in teaching pupils to manage risk and keep themselves safe, including

when online and using new technologies.

- Parents are very positive about the school and its place at the heart of the community. A minority are concerned about some aspects of behaviour, and inspectors did find that some pupils do not follow leaders' expectations of conduct in class.
- The majority of staff feel well supported by leaders and have benefited from the local 'light-touch' support provided through the local consortium arrangement.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. During the inspection, they visited the local polling station to find out more about the democratic process. They were able to describe why having a vote is so important and could relate this to the sacrifices of the suffragette movement. This example is typical of the school's commitment to core British values, such as democracy.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not challenged school leaders sufficiently well over recent years to ensure that the attainment and progress of specific groups are good enough, particularly in reading and mathematics. They rely too heavily on the information that is presented to them, rather than seeing it first hand through regular visits to the school.
- There is a desire to move the school forward but there is too little rigour in the systems for holding leaders to account. For example, governors have a general awareness of where teaching has been stronger or weaker, but their current understanding of the impact that teaching is having on progress and attainment is limited.
- Nevertheless, governors are highly committed to the school at a time of change and are determined to maintain an ethos and curriculum that are right for pupils. They are quite rightly proud of the care and guidance provided by staff at the school.
- Governors are also successful in keeping children safe and secure. Their work in trying to establish an internal network for pupils called 'The Bridge' has been successful in making pupils aware of the importance of safety online.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a clear understanding that the safety of children is everyone's responsibility, and staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. There are effective partnerships with other agencies to support pupils and their families. A recently appointed learning mentor has strengthened further a deliberate team approach to keeping pupils safe.
- Pupils, parents and staff are united in agreement that pupils are safe at school. Pupils report little bullying and have great confidence in the staff's ability to support them, should they be in difficulty.
- Systems for staff recruitment and vetting are rigorous. Training for safeguarding and child protection is up to date, as is the training for both staff and governors, which assists them in protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good across the school, especially in key stage 2. Teachers have yet to receive accurate direction and feedback on how they can improve their practice because leaders have an over-generous view of the quality of teaching.
- As more middle leaders become involved in actions and discussions about how to improve teaching, there is evidence of emerging improvements to teaching this year. For example, a focus on reasoning in mathematics has led to the setting of more challenging activities in lessons. However, the quality of work which follows is not always good.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning has, at times, been inaccurate. As a result, it is difficult for teachers to plan work which meets the particular needs of pupils. For example, the progress made over time by the most able pupils is not good enough, given their starting points.
- For a sizeable proportion of pupils, teachers' expectations of the presentation of work do not reflect the high standards seen in most 'Time to Write' books. Some work is messy and shows a lack of pride, and some tasks are left unfinished.
- The quality of teachers' questioning is variable. When good, it is sharp and precise, helping the teacher to gain an understanding of what the pupil knows or needs. On other occasions, questions do not have the depth required for pupils to develop their learning. This is also true of the feedback that pupils receive on how to improve their work. Some pupils who spoke to inspectors were unsure about how their work could be better.
- Reading is improving, especially in key stage 1. Here, the teaching of phonics is consistently good, leading to good attainment. This is having a positive impact on the writing standards throughout the school. While teachers ensure that pupils read a variety of literature at key stage 2, staff are aware of the need to develop greater depth to pupils' understanding of these texts.
- Additional adults in the classrooms support learning well, particularly for those pupils who require extra support or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive throughout the school. For example, during the inspection, in Year 6 mathematics lessons, pupils were inspired and motivated to solve 'big thinking' challenges involving huge numbers. There was a 'buzz' around the classrooms as pupils worked individually or in small groups and teachers supported them skilfully.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and their enthusiasm is evident. Technology is often used in lessons to good effect in capturing children's attention and developing concepts. For example, in one lesson, an exciting advertisement was used through the interactive board to stimulate thinking ahead, ready for a persuasive writing activity.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Governors are rightly proud of the inclusivity of the school and its commitment to all pupils. This shows in the way that leaders have created a strong team of staff who monitor the welfare of pupils.
- This team of well-trained staff lead on creating a culture of support and guidance. The impact is clear in the views of parents and pupils, one parent referring to St Matthew's as being like a 'second home' to some pupils. Inspectors were able to hear and read first-hand testimonies about how the school has had a significant impact on improving children's confidence and sense of well-being.
- Derogatory language is very rare in the school and staff are proactive in ensuring that pupils respect each other's differences. This is strengthened by the school's faith-based values.
- The range of curriculum activities means that pupils are given many opportunities to develop talents, which give them confidence and enjoyment. Cheerleading sessions for all age groups, including for past pupils, are typical of the broad range of activities on offer which develop a sense of identity and well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Not all pupils settle to their work and, consequently, learning time is lost. The work in pupils' books is often untidy and poorly presented, suggesting that expectations from adults are not always high enough.
- Pupils generally play well with each other and behave well as they move around the school. They show courtesy and good manners. In the case of the older pupils, some rough play does detract from pupils' enjoyment of breaktimes and lunchtimes. Leaders have tried to set up designated quiet areas in an effort to solve this problem.
- There is general respect for the views of others. Similarly, pupils respect those times when they are together, for example when at a whole-school singing practice. Inspectors observed pupils listening carefully and then singing in unison with precision and expression.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and said that it is rare in the school. School records confirm this.
- Pupils are happy at school. Attendance is improving and is close to the national average. The work of the learning mentor and wider inclusion team has had a beneficial impact on raising the attendance of those pupils who are disadvantaged.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics was significantly below the national average, representing slow progress for pupils from their starting points at the end of key stage 1. The proportions of pupils working at a higher level were also below national figures in reading and mathematics.

Challenge for the most able pupils is patchy across classes and in different subjects and, as a consequence, this group of pupils does not do as well as it should.

- While progress has improved this year, particularly in year 6, it is not consistently good across year groups and across subjects. The school has taken swift and decisive action to change the way it challenges and assesses pupils, and there is emerging evidence that this is having an impact on rates of progress. However, because assessment systems are not robust enough, it is unclear how well embedded this progress is.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard at key stage 1 was in line with the national average. However, the proportion achieving greater depth was below average. This year, more effective teaching is leading to higher proportions reaching the higher standard.
- The number of pupils who reached the expected level in the national phonics check in 2016 was close to the national average. Good teaching is leading to continued improvements this year, with a large majority meeting expectations.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception is increasing and is now similar to rates found nationally. The school's analysis indicates that a high number of the current pupils are on track to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders are effective in allocating funding for disadvantaged pupils, especially those who require extra support. As a result, their progress is often quicker than that of their peers. However, they are some way off the attainment of all pupils nationally by the time they leave school, despite this improvement.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress which is similar to that of their peers. A newly appointed leader responsible for the progress of these pupils has strengthened monitoring procedures, and good guidance from well-trained staff has assisted in more recent improvements to pupils' outcomes.
- Across science and foundation subjects, the work given to pupils is not always appropriate for their age or ability. This is true in both key stages, where work is often too easy for the pupils.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Leadership is strong and is focused on outcomes for children. The good progress made by the children means that they are well prepared for the expectations they face when moving into Year 1.
- Children exhibit positive learning characteristics. For example, they are able to work independently with minimal supervision. Additionally, they listen well in class sessions, showing respect for each other by waiting for their turn to speak. Routines are well understood.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants model expectations clearly and are quick to take opportunities to enrich children's learning.
- A large, spacious outdoor provision gives pupils many opportunities to extend their learning. The current topic on mini-beasts is allowing many 'bug-hunts' to take place

with magnifying glasses. From these, pupils found out how a snail moves and used appropriate mathematical language to describe this.

- Adults are skilled in modelling language well. The teaching of phonics is good and this provides the basis for a love of early reading in which parents are fully involved. The classrooms celebrate language well, with much of the children's written work displayed on the walls.
- Children's achievements are collated highly effectively in detailed learning journals. These assist in monitoring children's progress and planning for new learning. Leaders have recently developed more accurate assessments for children as they begin school, assisting them to measure progress in detail.
- Leaders are active in involving parents and families early in their child's education. This ensures a smooth transition to school from a variety of pre-school settings. A 'wow wall' allows parents and children to leave evidence of development in all the areas of the curriculum. Parents speak very highly of their communications with the school.
- The indoor environment covers all the areas of learning, and children are able to sustain learning for lengthy periods. Inspectors observed a group of children who spent several minutes in the 'Enchanted Forest' area of the classroom, highly focused on the selection of books provided, and who could distinguish panthers and cheetahs. Some resources, including books, look as if they have seen better days and this detracts somewhat from the overall attractiveness of the learning environment.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective, and leaders are proactive in making sure that children's welfare in the early years is of a high priority.

School details

Unique reference number	106450
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10024399

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	561
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Bond
Headteacher	Elaine Tyrrell
Telephone number	01942 747818
Website	www.highfieldsaintmatthews.wigan.sch.uk/
Email address	enquiries@admin.highfieldsaintmatthews.wigan.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16– 17 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Highfield St Matthew’s is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There are two classes in each year group, except in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 4, where there are three classes.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school has a smaller than average proportion of pupils who are supported by the

pupil premium funding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes at least once in order to observe teaching, talk to pupils about their learning and see their work in books. One visit was carried out jointly with the headteacher, and another with the school’s deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors also spoke to pupils about behaviour in and around the school and saw how pupils behaved outside at breaktimes and lunchtimes and in singing practice.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the chair of governors, a further group of governors and a representative of the school’s local consortium, which offers support through the local authority.
- Inspectors checked on how pupils were progressing through observations of their workbooks across a range of subjects and year groups. On one of these occasions, the headteacher took part.
- Inspectors took account of 36 responses to Parent View, in addition to handwritten responses.
- Inspectors took account of the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jeremy Barnes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Eithne Proffitt	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Downing	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Quinn, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector

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