

St Aidan's Primary School – A Church of England Academy

Norfolk Street, Mill Hill, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 4EW

Inspection dates

19–20 September 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils in key stage 2 have too many gaps in their reading, writing and mathematics skills. Over time, pupils' rates of progress have not been strong enough.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable in key stages 1 and 2.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge the most able pupils to achieve the highest standards. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' work are not always accurate. Some staff do not take the opportunity to clarify pupils' misconceptions as they arise.
- As a result of their weak basic reading skills, some pupils' comprehension skills are not sufficiently well developed. This hinders their progress in other subjects, for example when solving word problems in mathematics.
- Over time, leaders and governors have not used performance data regularly or sharply enough to check how effectively their actions are improving outcomes for pupils.
- Opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics vary too much across different year groups.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders have brought about some improvements, particularly in teaching, learning and assessment in the early years.
- Children get off to a flying start in the early years. They settle extremely well into school life, respond well to the interesting curriculum provided and make good progress.
- Pupils attend regularly and behave well. They say that they feel safe.
- Staff work hard with a wide range of external agencies to provide additional support for potentially vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Pupils particularly enjoy the opportunities provided to attend after-school clubs and go on school trips beyond their local community.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it enables pupils to make consistently strong progress across all year groups, and particularly in key stage 2, by ensuring that teachers:
 - have suitably high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve
 - challenge the most able pupils to work at greater depth and reach the highest possible standards
 - check pupils' understanding to make sure that they deal with misconceptions quickly and effectively
 - continue to improve the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' work and use this knowledge to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management and so raise standards by:
 - better using checks on the quality of teaching to eliminate remaining inconsistencies
 - ensuring that pupils in all classes are given the opportunity to develop core English and mathematics skills across the wider curriculum
 - making better and more regular use of performance information and measurable targets to check on the impact of school improvement initiatives.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not been able to secure a consistently good standard of teaching across the school. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment are too variable, including for the most able pupils.
- Leaders and managers have not used performance data and clear, specific targets regularly or effectively enough. This has meant that pupils' progress has not been as rapid as it could have been, particularly across key stage 2.
- Leaders have introduced a new system for tracking pupils' progress cross the school. Teachers now have clearer information on the progress of individuals and groups of learners, which informs the planning of lessons and interventions to support learning. However, gaps in pupils' knowledge remain, especially for the older pupils: for example, poor spelling and not knowing their multiplication tables.
- There has been a period of transition in staffing. This had a particularly negative impact on the Year 6 cohort which left the school in the summer of 2017. The headteacher and senior leaders have now been successful in securing more-stable and appropriate staffing across the school. They have gained the confidence of all staff in a relatively short time and all are committed to ensuring that pupils reach their full potential.
- Subject leaders have identified that pupils need to practise their reading, writing and mathematics skills more regularly. However, they do not monitor thoroughly enough how effectively these skills are being developed across different areas of the curriculum in different classes, and so there are inconsistencies.
- Current arrangements for performance management are effective. Leaders and governors challenge underperformance. There are links with other schools to learn from their good practice, but these links are at a relatively early stage of development.
- All teachers have leadership roles in this small school. Senior leaders provide continuing professional development for staff, which is enabling them to develop their skills. An example of the impact of this is evident in the quality of the provision in the early years.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is used to benefit disadvantaged pupils. There are specific interventions to support learning and to enable this group of pupils to participate in a broad range of opportunities such as a programme which develops pupils' social and emotional resilience. During the last academic year, the progress of disadvantaged pupils across all year groups was similar to that of other pupils in the school and lower than this group nationally.
- Additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well. Staff implement individual education pathways around the specific needs of a pupil, with bespoke support from teachers and teaching assistants. When needed, the school sources external professional support from a wide range of agencies, with whom staff work exceptionally well.

- Leaders use the specialist funding for physical education (PE) and sports to build pupils' confidence and team-working skills. For example, there are coaching sessions from sports specialists who work with pupils and also develop the skills of staff.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad and balanced. Teachers develop religious education and personal, social and health education effectively as part of the school's topic-based approach. Assemblies, lessons and faith festivals enable pupils to learn about other cultures, tolerance and British values. A varied range of experiences, including out-of-school activities and trips, further enrich the curriculum and broaden pupils' experiences.
- The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school's work. They find staff approachable and say that teachers keep parents informed about the progress that their children make.

Governance of the school

- The governors recognise that much still needs to be achieved in order to raise pupils' achievement. They are beginning to challenge school leaders more. They have recognised that the previous calendar of governor committee meetings was unrealistic and have now implemented more timely meetings to maximise their impact on school improvement.
- The local governing committee recognise the need to sharpen their skills and have recently undertaken a skills audit to help inform how each member can fully challenge and support the school.
- The relatively new team of governors is passionately committed to the improvement of the school. Governors have a clear vision for the school within its community. They are working with the trust to fill vacancies on the governing committee.
- Governors each take responsibility for key areas. For example, the link governor responsible for special educational needs and/or disabilities is aware of each of the pupils in this group and works with the leader for special educational needs and/or disabilities to monitor their progress.
- The governors have worked effectively with senior leaders to make new staff appointments.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Staff provide excellent support for vulnerable pupils and their families. Regular training for all staff and governors ensures that they have a high level of awareness and the ability to manage situations as they arise.
- Staff take appropriate action to identify pupils who may be at risk of neglect, abuse or sexual exploitation. Leaders regularly review the impact of actions taken. Links with external professionals and parents are timely and appropriate. School staff and multiple external agencies provide tailored support for those in need.

- Access to the school is very well monitored. Staff closely check visitors' credentials and are vigilant in monitoring access arrangements so pupils are secure at all times.
- Leaders protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Staff are trained, vigilant and confident. They encourage open discussion from pupils from the very earliest age.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There are variations in the quality of teaching and learning over time across the school and across subjects. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have faced many challenges in establishing a permanent team of staff and leaders who are able to provide the effective quality of teaching required at St Aidan's.
- Teaching does not always provide pupils, especially the most able, with enough challenge to achieve work of the highest standard. Some teachers do not consistently provide pupils with work at a great enough depth to enable them to reach higher standards. Others find the work too hard because of gaps in their knowledge.
- Although teachers monitor the progress of pupils' understanding, at times teachers do not deal swiftly enough with pupils' misconceptions. As a result, pupils' understanding can be insecure. For example, in key stage 1, pupils were learning about writing non-chronological reports but when asked by the teacher where they would find the title of a report, some were confused.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the whole curriculum in every year group. For example, in some theme books, extended writing opportunities showed that the expectations of teachers varied in terms of the quality and quantity of pupils' work. Through scrutiny of pupils' written work, it is evident that on occasions teachers are too generous with their assessment of pupils' writing, which makes it hard to accurately identify their next steps in learning.
- The teaching of reading has a high priority across the school. The teaching of phonics is good with sessions that are fast and fun and challenge pupils to think and work hard. Those pupils who read to the inspectors could work out unfamiliar words by blending sounds together. The results of the phonics screening checks show a rapid improvement since the school opened.
- The teaching of mathematics remains a priority for the school. Key stage 1 pupils have benefited from stronger teaching in the early years and during the inspection showed confidence in estimating distances when using an Ordnance Survey map.
- Where teaching is most effective in the school, teachers and teaching assistants work together closely. They effectively plan their learning to meet the range of abilities of pupils. They know how to ask thoughtful questions of pupils to support and extend learning. Staff often use assessments of pupils carefully within activities and over time to amend and improve support and intervention.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is becoming more effective, enabling pupils to make similar progress to that of others with similar starting points. The work of skilled teaching assistants makes a strong contribution to the progress of this group of pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff make it a priority to encourage pupils and to help them feel positive about themselves and their lives. As a result, pupils have good self-awareness and show respect for each other, staff and visitors to the school.
- Pupils are punctual and quick to return to lessons after social times. They move around the school from one activity to another with no loss of time.
- The school's culture promotes pupils' welfare effectively. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe, enjoy school and are listened to. They have a clear understanding of how to stay safe when meeting strangers or travelling on or near roads. They have a strong knowledge of how to use the internet and social media safely.
- Teachers weave British values, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and personal, social and health education across the work of the school. This rich experience is evident in the environment and the work displayed around the school. Pupils talked excitedly about being members of after-school clubs and enjoy trips beyond their local environment which enrich their life experiences.
- The school has its own core values of thankfulness, trust, friendship, endurance, humility, forgiveness and wisdom which the pupils are happy to talk about. These values provide a basis to the community-focused, equal opportunities ethos of the school. Assemblies, lessons, links with other schools and celebration events are used effectively to discuss different cultures, faiths and belief systems as well as tolerance and mutual respect.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They carefully listen, concentrate and take pride in their work.
- Leaders and staff work successfully to set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour throughout the school. They are very well trained to effectively support individual pupils or classes who find managing their own feelings and behaviour difficult. As a result, pupils respond positively to staff and are polite.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well. When incidents of poor behaviour occur, staff quietly but effectively manage them. There are clear reward systems for good behaviour and sanctions if pupils behave inappropriately.
- Pupils understand what behaviour, including that online, might constitute bullying. They say that bullying occasionally occurs but staff use transparent systems to deal with issues when they arise. A very small minority of parents raised concerns through Ofsted's text-messaging service but inspectors checked records of incidents and how

staff follow these up and were satisfied that staff use appropriate systems and procedures when any bullying occurs.

- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and attendance is in line with the national average. The school is working effectively with the small minority of families whose children have too many absences which interrupt their progress. These efforts are resulting in an improvement in the attendance of those who have been persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because too many pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The turbulence in staffing over time has led to variability in the quality of teaching and this has affected pupils' attainment and progress.
- In 2017, attainment and progress in mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were stronger than in reading and writing but nevertheless below the standards expected nationally. Improvements to the quality of teaching are beginning to have an impact on pupils' outcomes but there are still too many pupils who have gaps in their learning. For example, too many pupils are not secure in mental mathematics and recalling multiplication tables, which slows their progress.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in reading at the end of Year 2 in 2017 was below the national average for 2016. This represents a dip in performance when compared with the school's previous Year 2 cohort in 2016. The current Year 2 cohort made expected progress during the previous academic year and those who read to the inspectors were able to use their phonics skills well to work out unfamiliar words. They could also retell in their own words what they had read.
- Similarly, the proportion of the Year 6 cohort of 2017 who did not reach national standards was too high and progress was weak. Again, one fifth of this cohort joined during key stage 2 and none had the benefit of the good-quality provision now evident in the early years.
- Inspection evidence shows that, across current year groups in key stage 2, most pupils are now making at least expected progress. This represents an improving picture.
- The school's new tracking system also shows that across the school pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate. There are clear signs that stronger outcomes at the end of the early years and in Year 1 phonics are being built upon as pupils move through the school.
- In 2014/15 and 2015/16 the percentage of pupils who passed the phonics screening check was in line with national figures. The dip in 2016/17 was due to one third of pupils joining the cohort during the course of the year with skills lower than those expected for their age. Leaders have provided bespoke training for teachers and teaching assistants, who now deliver good-quality teaching of phonics which the pupils enjoy.
- Pupils are beginning to express their ideas more fully when writing for different audiences in their English work. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning have led to attainment in writing at the end of each key stage in 2017 which is

below that expected nationally. The school is addressing this and scrutiny of pupils work, alongside the tracking of pupils' progress, confirms that more pupils in the current Years 2, 4, 5 and 6 groups made expected progress during the last academic year.

- Over time too few of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, reached the standards that they should for their age and ability. However, recent changes to teaching are beginning to help these pupils make greater progress. Nonetheless, there is more to do to ensure that they gain greater depth in their learning.
- The school is currently upgrading the library and has invested in a scheme to provide new reading materials at regular intervals. Despite the school's efforts, some pupils do not read regularly at home and/or for pleasure and this hinders their progress in other subjects. The school goes to great lengths to compensate for this.
- Evidence of disadvantaged pupils' work in their books, listening to them read and evaluating case studies show that this group are beginning to catch up in their learning. Some disadvantaged pupils also have complex needs. The progress of individuals is now monitored carefully, with regular reviews of the effectiveness of interventions.
- Progress is improving for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is linked to the impact of training for teaching assistants, who have developed their skills in supporting pupils in their learning.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership and teaching in the Reception Year are effective. There has been a significantly improving trend in outcomes since the school opened. Each year the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development in the early years has improved and is now close to the national average. This represents good progress given their low starting points, particularly in communication and language.
- The proportion of children in 2017 that achieved a good level of development was close to the national average.
- Staff know the children and their families well. The quality of teaching is strong. Teachers have high expectations based on sound assessment of children's achievement. Staff have a good understanding of the early years and ensure that the children get off to a good start.
- Children's individual development is captured in learning journeys which clearly highlight the good progress that children make. The learning journeys provide a good mix of evidence, for example photographs, notes on focused observations and pieces of children's work. These are shared with parents.
- The learning environment both indoors and outside is well resourced. Staff plan activities well and provide children with a wide range of experiences which cover all areas of their learning. Staff develop children's interests and are proactive in providing support and challenge.

- Despite only having attended school for two full weeks, during the inspection children showed that they are highly interested, have good learning routines in place and listen well. For example, those painting knew to wear red aprons, those playing in the sand wore green aprons and those playing in the water area, when questioned by the teaching assistant, had remembered that they needed to wear blue aprons.
- Behaviour is good. Excellent transition arrangements prior to starting school lead to children settling extremely well into school life and routines. During the inspection it was clear to see how happy the children are to come to school, and this was reflected in conversations with parents. From an early age, children show respect for each other, the adults around them and visitors to the school.
- Relationships between staff, children and parents are very positive. Parents are frequently involved in learning. Each week, the parents of four children are invited to play alongside their children on a Thursday morning. This is helping parents to understand how children learn through play and encourages learning beyond school.
- Training has a positive impact on the work of staff. Leaders have positive links with other schools sharing best practice and raising standards. Staff have transformed the outdoor area and make good use of the extra learning opportunities.
- Welfare requirements are met. The provision is well staffed. It is a safe environment and all statutory school policies are in place, ensuring that pupils are safe and feel safe.

School details

Unique reference number	141350
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10036589

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Anona Pearson
Headteacher	Rachel Senior
Telephone number	01254 53148
Website	www.staidanscepschool.co.uk
Email address	office@staidans.blackburn.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Aidan's is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.
- There is much higher than average mobility for pupils joining St Aidan's other than at the usual times. In 2016/17, almost one fifth of pupils across year groups in key stage 1 and key stage 2 joined after the start of the school year.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirement for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Eight of these sessions were observed jointly with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and held formal and informal discussions with pupils.
- Pupils' work in their books and also tracking records were scrutinised.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, the chair of the local governing committee, the chief executive of the Cidari Multi-Academy Trust, curriculum leaders for English and mathematics and the inclusion coordinator.
- There were not enough responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to generate a report. Consideration was given to free-text responses from six parents and inspectors met with parents at the school gates to seek their views. Inspectors considered 19 staff questionnaires. There were 11 responses to the pupil questionnaires. Inspectors considered the school's recent pupil and parent survey results.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents. These included the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents, pupils' tracking information, subject leaders' documents, minutes of the local governing committee meetings, safeguarding documentation and various records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Joan Williamson

Ofsted Inspector

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