

St Ambrose Catholic Primary School

Rostrevor Road, Adswood, Stockport, Cheshire SK3 8LQ

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and her senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are determined to continue to improve the quality of education at the school.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and contributes successfully to the good progress that pupils make.
- The quality of teaching across the school is good. Teachers use questioning effectively to enable most pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects.
- Pupils feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils behave well around school and in classrooms. Teachers and leaders deal swiftly with the few incidents of misbehaviour.
- Attendance rates remain close to the national average. Leaders work effectively with other agencies to reduce the proportion of persistent absenteeism.
- Governors are supportive of the school, know its strengths and weaknesses and contribute to its continuous improvement.
- Leaders have used professional development and training opportunities within the school and in partnership with other local schools to improve the quality of teaching.
- Children in the early years make good progress. Most of them are ready for Year 1 by the time they finish their Reception Year.
- Across a range of subjects, almost all pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress due to well-planned interventions. Although their attainment is improving over time, the difference from that of others nationally is still too great.
- Teachers occasionally do not give work that challenges the most able pupils. Proportions of pupils attaining the higher standards are not high enough.
- Success criteria in the school development plan and in teachers' performance targets are not sharp or measurable enough to allow the school to hold staff to account for pupils' achievements.
- Subject leadership is in the early stages of development as new leaders begin to implement their plans for their subjects. However, leaders do not yet know how well pupils are achieving in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The local authority provided effective support to leaders and governors, enabling leaders to improve progress and attainment in 2017.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure even stronger attainment and progress for pupils across the school by:
 - ensuring that a greater proportion of pupils attain the higher standards in national tests at the end of key stages 1 and 2
 - continuing to reduce the difference between the attainment of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding in school and that of other pupils nationally.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - further developing the roles of leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics, so that they have a better understanding of the attainment and progress of pupils in their subjects
 - ensuring that success criteria regarding pupils' progress and attainment in performance management documents and in the school's development plan are measurable, to hold teachers more clearly to account for the achievement of pupils in their classes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and her senior leaders have ensured that teaching has further improved since the last inspection. Leaders and governors have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation is accurate, and leaders have identified their priorities – the teaching of writing, the development of early years provision and the performance of disadvantaged pupils – and included them in the school's development plan. While leaders have tackled these priorities with determination, they recognise that disadvantaged pupils can make even more progress to better match the attainment of other pupils nationally. They also understand that expectations of the most able pupils are inconsistent across the school and that increasing proportions of these pupils should be attaining the higher standards.
- Leaders provide effective training to staff and they have developed and fostered a strong, collaborative team ethic. Staff value the support of their colleagues. For example, teachers frequently take the opportunity to learn from each other by observing strong teaching in school. Teachers also identify other training that will enhance their skills and career aspirations. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good and improving and a large majority of current pupils make strong progress.
- Performance management processes are effective in improving the quality of teaching across the school. Leaders agree targets with staff and link them to the priorities in the school's development plan. However, as with the school development plan, teachers' targets are not always sharply focused or measurable.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have developed a vision for pupils to be 'prepared for life in school and beyond', based around Christian values, self-worth, respect, love and service. The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through their daily learning experiences and contributes effectively to the good progress pupils make. Leadership of subjects such as history, geography, computing and art are in the early stages of development because staff are relatively new to their roles. However, they have formulated clear plans of action and, in some cases, started to work with other teachers to design programmes of work. Consequently, leaders do not yet know how well pupils are attaining or progressing in their subjects.
- Subject leaders of English and mathematics have a secure knowledge of the standards and quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas, because they carry out regular checks, including book scrutinies, which provide them with useful information about the progress pupils make. Leaders have introduced strategies to improve teaching and learning, such as a system of peer observations, in which teachers observe strong practice and learn from each other. They then apply effective methods they have learned to their own teaching. Recent checks show that the strategies to improve the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics have had a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Leaders have developed a programme of curricular and extra-curricular activities that effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through

class discussions, teachers promote fundamental British values. Election procedures for school council representatives, for example, develop pupils' understanding of democracy well.

- Leaders have a clear vision for the pupil premium funding to support pupils in school and beyond and to provide opportunities that pupils might not otherwise experience. They identify barriers to learning and they put in place interventions to meet individual needs, whether academic, social, physical or financial. They monitor these interventions regularly. Pupils' improving attainment and progress show the positive impact of leaders' actions. Leaders recognise that they need to continue with their strategies so that the attainment of pupils who are disadvantaged better matches that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders make effective use of the primary school physical education and sport premium to develop pupils' sports skills and their involvement in competitive sport. They employ a sports coach to model positive attitudes to sport and they develop pupils' sense of aspiration by arranging visits from, for instance, an Olympic athlete. Sports coaches also work well with staff to develop their teaching skills and confidence.
- The school uses funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities well. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is an experienced and well-trained leader. She monitors the effectiveness of interventions well through a range of processes and is, therefore, able to measure accurately the impact of the additional support pupils receive. As a result, most current pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Support from the local authority was swift and extensive following the disappointing test results in key stage 2 in 2016, although this has now been scaled back following the impact of leaders' work. Advisers working with the school have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders continue to use a range of strategies to ensure that attendance rates remain close to the national average. They publish attendance rates of classes in the school's newsletter and offer rewards to pupils who have 100% attendance. Leaders work effectively with other agencies to reduce the proportion of persistent absenteeism.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses as a result of frequent visits into school and the information provided by the headteacher and other leaders.
- Governors challenge and support leaders effectively to ensure that they make the improvements identified and agreed in the school development plan. They have successfully used their recently created monitoring committee as a vehicle for holding leaders accountable for pupils' achievements.

Governors are aware of their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and have received appropriate training. They monitor well the additional funds for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and pupils who are disadvantaged. They check carefully that the use of this funding has a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established clear procedures, which staff understand, for reporting safeguarding concerns. Staff and governors have received appropriate training for their roles and know the signs of abuse. They talk knowledgeably, for instance, about radicalisation and female genital mutilation.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to stay safe because staff talk to them about keeping safe. The school works successfully with local agencies to ensure that they have identified and effectively supported vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders successfully engage with parents to make sure that pupils are safe and supported in school.
- Leaders keep and store securely meticulous records relating to safeguarding, including the necessary recruitment checks on members of staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have taken effective action to improve teaching since the last inspection. In mathematics, individual pupils who staff believe need extra support and groups of disadvantaged pupils and of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, work on new mathematical themes prior to class lessons to give them the confidence to learn new aspects of the subject successfully. In writing, teachers use high-quality texts as a stimulus to enable pupils to produce better pieces of writing over time. These actions have helped ensure that current pupils, with the exception of the most able pupils, across almost all year groups are making good progress in a range of subjects.
- A strength of teaching at the school is the way staff use questioning to encourage pupils to think for themselves or to clarify misconceptions. Pupils of all abilities recognise the importance of this strategy in helping them become independent and confident learners. Effective questioning seen in most classes during the inspection allowed pupils to understand how well they are acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects. However, in some classes and in some subjects, this is less effective and results in slower progress and a lack of challenge.
- Leaders have employed a number of teaching assistants across the school, who work effectively to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Teachers match the demands of work well to their assessments of pupils' learning needs, so that these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations of almost all groups of pupils. Expectations of the most able are inconsistent across the school. Pupils are expected to behave well in lessons, although staff have effective strategies to deal with the few occasions when there is misbehaviour. As a result, pupils are engaged in their lessons, with positive attitudes to learning, and a large majority of them make good progress.
- Teachers are adept at providing opportunities to develop work in English and mathematics across the curriculum. Year 6 pupils appreciate the chance to apply their knowledge of writing structures to a historical context when writing diaries as a soldier in the Second World War. Pupils in Year 5 produced artwork inspired by their historical

knowledge of the Mayan creation.

- Teachers use assessment well during lessons to ensure that pupils are learning. When teachers observe any misconceptions, they use a range of strategies to work with individuals or groups to address them. Consequently, pupils are confident that they will get the support they need to learn successfully.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and mainly use it effectively to plan lessons that engage pupils' interest and provide sufficiently challenging work for most of them. In some subjects, such as art, this results in very high-quality pieces of detailed work. However, the work expected of the most able pupils is sometimes not sufficiently challenging.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe in school and understand how to keep themselves safe. They have a clear understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils were able to describe how teachers had spoken with them about staying safe during the recent building work in school.
- In conversation with inspectors and in response to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, a minority of parents stated that bullying and the school's procedures to deal with it are a concern. However, a range of other evidence, including discussions with pupils and analysis of the school's behaviour logs, does not support this opinion. Bullying is rare, and leaders deal with it swiftly and effectively when necessary.
- Pupils value the support and encouragement they receive from their teachers. They are developing the self-confidence and independence to be successful learners. They are particularly appreciative of the clarifications and reminders from staff about past learning and describe lessons as 'fun'.
- Pupils benefit from a number of clubs and visits that the school provides and they appreciate the opportunity to play sports against other local schools. These activities, along with, for example, regular opportunities to support various charities and visitors from other faiths, enhance and enrich pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There are a number of opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility in school. These include becoming a 'yellow hat' (a pupil, identified by wearing a yellow hat, who supports others to resolve conflicts with their peers at breaktime and lunchtime) or a member of the school council. Pupils selected, or elected, to these roles carry out their duties with pride and to good effect.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is orderly. They play well together in the playground.

The younger pupils particularly enjoy the games organised for them by the play buddies. There are occasional examples of misbehaviour, but staff are effective at dealing with these.

- Attendance has been consistently around the national average for a number of years. Leaders continue to utilise a range of strategies, including rewards for high attendance, to keep it at the national average. The proportion of persistent absences at the time of the inspection was higher than the national average, but leaders are aware of this and are addressing it with determination.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' work in books and the school's own assessment information indicate that most pupils currently in school make good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. This is because the majority of teaching is well planned and interventions are targeted to address identified pupils' needs. Additionally, leaders have ensured that staff are appropriately trained to deliver the interventions and teachers are supported to secure continuous improvements. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' writing includes varied sentence structures and phrases to add interest. In almost all year groups, the most able pupils complete similar work to other pupils, which means that the challenge for these pupils is insufficient and not enough pupils achieve the higher standards. However, in upper key stage 2 the expectations for these pupils is greater. This ensures that the most able pupils in these year groups are able to produce emotive and cohesive pieces of writing. A typical example from a diary of a soldier is, 'Tears trickle down my cheeks like raindrops on a bitter day. I feel dejected, despondent and dispirited.'
- In recent years, pupils' progress and attainment at key stage 2 in reading, in writing and in mathematics have been below the national average. However, leaders and governors took swift and decisive action following the 2016 outcomes, resulting in improvements in progress and attainment in 2017. Although the combined reading, writing and mathematics attainment remained below the national average, attainment in each of these separate areas was close to, or matched, the national average.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged make good progress, and their attainment is stronger than in previous years due to targeted intervention programmes. Leaders and teachers use discussions about pupils' progress to determine which pupils need this additional support. Leaders use standardised tests at the beginning and end of each intervention to determine the impact on pupils' achievements. Because effective support is designed for individuals, disadvantaged pupils are moving closer to the average for the attainment of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. The SENCo manages provision efficiently and effectively identifies pupils' needs. She has developed strong relationships with a range of agencies that, support these pupils' needs well. Pupils benefit from carefully planned sequences of lessons and support, which help them to make strong progress.
- Pupils read with appropriate fluency and comprehension, considering their age and

ability. They use their knowledge of phonics effectively to read unfamiliar words. Pupils read widely and for pleasure and enjoy reading. Pupils in Year 1 achieve well in the national phonics check.

- Pupils acquire appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of subjects other than English and mathematics. The work in their books shows that they make good progress in these subjects. For example, in Year 2, a strong focus on historical vocabulary allows pupils to develop a deeper understanding of cause and effect. In Year 6, first-hand observations of historical artefacts enable pupils to hypothesise about their use.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge that are below those that are typical for their age and stage of development. Through good teaching and a range of supportive interventions, greater numbers of children than in previous years are making good progress and are well prepared for Year 1. Leaders' assessment records and work in children's books show that the proportion of children working at age-related expectations is increasing.
- The leader of the early years has a very effective understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the early years provision. She is keen to secure improvements and has identified, for example, that the development of speech and language and physical skills (which are particularly low on entry to the early years) is central to improved outcomes.
- Children who are disadvantaged make good progress. This is because staff provide a number of additional activities which effectively support their learning. These activities are particularly effective in language acquisition and speech and language development.
- Leaders' efforts to involve parents in their child's education are mixed. Parents have asked for sessions about phonics but no parents attended the sessions staff planned for them. Some parents add comments to their child's learning journey and accept invitations to join their children in school activities. Staff meet with parents before children join the Nursery or Reception class to ascertain the child's needs and establish which agencies they may need to involve. This ensures that transition into the early years is well managed.
- Children's behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good. They are confident in exploring activities indoors and outside, demonstrating that they feel safe. There are no breaches of the welfare requirements and staff follow and know well the safeguarding procedures and policies applicable to the whole school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers provide well-planned activities which enthuse the children and are carefully matched to their learning needs. However, occasionally, the most able children find some tasks too easy, such as when adding two digits. A strength of teaching in the early years is the use of carefully crafted and probing questioning. For example, staff were able to develop children's mathematical vocabulary of size when building a rocket to travel into space.

- The relatively new members of staff have already created a strong team ethos and are capitalising on a wide range of training opportunities available in school and through the local schools' cluster. Recent training to promote middle-attaining children's writing through stories is having a positive impact on the quality of children's writing. The work in books shows that children supported through this intervention are beginning to write in simple sentences.

School details

Unique reference number	106115
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10042467

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

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	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Anthony Martin
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Hilton
Telephone number	01614 808466
Website	www.st-ambrose.stockport.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-ambrose.stockport.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium grant is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school works in partnership with a number of other, local primary schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning throughout the school in all classes and in a range of subjects. Some of these activities were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- Observations were made of pupils' behaviour at the beginning of the day, at lunchtime, at breaktime and in the classroom.
- The inspectors met with pupils, formally and informally, to listen to their views.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation including information about pupils' attainment and progress, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. Inspectors considered minutes of meetings and records relating to teaching and learning, pupils' attendance and behaviour and safeguarding of pupils, including those prepared by improvement partners. Scrutiny of the website was also undertaken.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents through informal meetings and through the school's own parental survey. Inspectors analysed 18 responses received through the free text facility on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors also analysed 10 responses to the pupil survey. There were no other survey responses.

Inspection team

Ian Shackleton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mark Quinn

Her Majesty's Inspector

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