

St Silas's CofE Primary School

St Silas Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 6JP

Inspection dates

7–8 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The school has not previously met, nor currently meets, fully the learning needs of pupils. This means that there are significant gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- There are large gaps in pupils' understanding and skills, particularly in mathematics and writing.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are not reliable. Consequently, teachers are unable to meet pupils' learning needs. There is a lack of challenge, particularly for middle-ability boys and the most able pupils.
- Leaders do not measure the effect of their actions to improve the school. Improvement plans lack precision.
- Leaders do not use pupil premium funding to full advantage. Disadvantaged pupils do not make the best possible progress.
- Newly appointed subject leaders are enthusiastic but have not had sufficient time to improve standards in geography, history and science.
- Teachers do not develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills consistently in mathematics and science.
- Although the curriculum is now broad and balanced, teachers have become deskilled in teaching the national curriculum. Leaders are providing the necessary professional development to address this.
- Some subjects are not taught in sufficient depth. This accounts for pupils' slow progress in writing and mathematics and in subjects such as geography, history and science.
- Pupils' progress slows when they move from the early years into Year 1.

The school has the following strengths

- Strong Christian values are promoted well. Pupils have a good understanding of other religions and cultures.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils have improved pupils' behaviour significantly. Pupils are eager to learn.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported and make better progress than other pupils in school.
- Leaders are battling successfully against a legacy of underperformance. They have improved pupils' progress in reading and in the early years.
- Leaders have invested heavily in the early years to improve resources and speech and language support. This has paid dividends. Children in the early years get off to a good start.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress rapidly by:
 - ensuring that teachers assess pupils' progress accurately so that they can match next steps to pupils' learning, particularly in mathematics and writing
 - improving teachers' knowledge of the national curriculum requirements, particularly in writing, mathematics, science and the wider curriculum, so that they can teach these subjects in greater depth and with a stronger focus on developing pupils' skills.
- Improve pupils' outcomes in writing, mathematics and other subjects by:
 - developing pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics and science
 - ensuring that there is enough challenge for pupils, particularly for middle-ability boys and the most able pupils, across a range of subjects.
- Ensure that leaders and governors develop a secure understanding of the effectiveness of their actions so that they can improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - having clear and succinct school development targets
 - frequently measuring and evaluating the impact of their actions
 - using the pupil premium funding effectively to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils
 - supporting newly appointed subject leaders so that they have a greater influence on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in subjects such as geography, history and science.
- Strengthen the transition from the early years into key stage 1 so that gains made by children in Reception are not lost.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since their appointment in 2016, leaders have remedied the failings of the previous curriculum and teaching structure. However, due to the extent of the inadequacies, leaders acknowledge that, despite improvements in teaching and learning, there is still much to do.
- Leaders have recognised that the way in which the curriculum was previously organised exposed serious failings in teachers' skills and in pupils' progress and understanding. Leaders have made bold decisions in order to turn the school around.
- The headteacher and her deputy have led the implementation of the national curriculum over the last 18 months. They have sought the professional development needed to support teachers who have become deskilled. This has started to turn the tide but not quickly enough to make up for weaknesses in the past.
- The school now provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Recent improvements mean that pupils can access all subjects in the primary curriculum. However, gaps in teachers' knowledge about the national curriculum requirements mean that some subjects, such as science, history and geography, are not taught in sufficient depth.
- Enrichment activities and extra-curricular clubs enhance the curriculum. Staff ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted well. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain and their knowledge of British values is good. The leadership of this area has always been a strength of the school.
- Many of the curriculum leaders are new to their leadership roles. They are enthusiastic, ambitious and keen to make a difference. Although they have the skills required to develop their subject areas, the work they have done to improve the curriculum has only recently started to impact on pupils' progress.
- Unreliable teacher assessment, an over-reliance on test data and generous judgements mean that leaders do not have an accurate picture of pupils' progress in writing and mathematics. The standard of writing in pupils' books confirms that progress in writing is not yet rapid enough. Senior leaders are acting on this and have developed useful links with a number of other schools to ensure that teachers have the necessary skills to assess pupils' work accurately.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are not specific enough and do not focus well enough on the effect of the actions that they take to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Pupil premium funding is largely used to provide additional teaching time to support pupils' learning. Most disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with other pupils in the school. However, as with other pupils, this is not quick enough to ensure that they catch up in their learning. Consequently, they lag behind other pupils nationally.
- Leaders use the additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport effectively to support the development of teachers' expertise in teaching PE, as well as widening the opportunities for pupils to engage in a range of sporting opportunities. However, leaders' plans do not have sharp, measurable outcomes to ensure that the funding is having the maximum impact possible.

- Leaders take the necessary action to ensure that pupils attend school. Attendance is rising and persistent absenteeism is reducing.
- Pupils display a good understanding of equalities and respect others and their views.

Governance of the school

- Governors have worked hard to improve their understanding of the school's performance. However, they have an overgenerous picture of the progress being made by pupils, which is critical if they are to measure the impact of the work of school leaders. This is because of the inaccuracies evident within the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress.
- Governors check to see that the school is meeting safeguarding requirements and ensure that their own safeguarding practices are kept up to date.
- A recent review of governance has clarified roles and responsibilities so governors are starting to have a more positive impact on school improvement.
- As a result of the review, governors visit the school with a clear focus and purpose to talk to staff and pupils, as they hold that 'seeing is believing'.
- The minutes of governors' meetings show that governors provide some support and challenge to the leadership team. However, governors accept that they need to develop a more rigorous approach to the challenge they offer leaders about pupils' progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff have received training and updates in line with statutory requirements. They are aware of the potential signs of abuse. All staff, including midday assistants, know what to do to raise concerns. Records of incidents and concerns are kept securely. Policies are up to date and the required checks made on newly appointed staff have been completed well.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. This is because of the positive relationships that they have with staff. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils with whom inspectors spoke understood the need to keep personal information safe when online. They were also aware of the potential dangers of talking to others over the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Teachers are recovering from a legacy of underperformance related to weak curriculum planning. Some have become deskilled in their teaching of the national curriculum and in their understanding of the curriculum requirements for different subjects. Large gaps in pupils' understanding and skills exist because teaching did not, and still does not, meet the needs of pupils. Staff now receive targeted professional support to enable them to teach the national

curriculum more effectively.

- Inconsistencies in the quality and accuracy of teachers' assessments mean that teachers are unable to match tasks to pupils' learning needs. Therefore, pupils' progress is not as rapid as it should be. Pupils' books show that there is a lack of challenge, particularly for middle-ability boys and most-able pupils in subjects such as writing, mathematics, science, history and geography.
- In mathematics and science, teachers do not focus enough on developing pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills. This hinders the progress that pupils make in these subjects.
- There are some early signs of improving practice at St Silas's. These include the effective use of teaching assistants, and pupils' improved behaviour in class. Teachers and staff are keen to steer the school in a more positive direction.
- The teaching of phonics is starting to improve. From the early years and into key stage 1, teachers have raised their expectations. Current information shows that more pupils are on track to reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. This is an improvement on results from the previous two years. Teachers have targeted boys' poor performance in phonics. As a result, the gap between boys' and girls' performance is narrowing.
- There are clear signs of improvement in reading. Inspectors' scrutiny of reading diaries shows that there is a clear focus on pupils' next steps and their individual targets. Teachers have worked hard to make sure that pupils' reading skills have improved. Inspectors listened to a number of readers of all ages, who demonstrated confident reading comprehension skills.
- This is an inclusive school. Increasing numbers of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are attending the school. The coordinator for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities ensures that additional funding is used well to support their learning. These pupils make better progress than other pupils in the school because their learning is supported effectively in class and in small-group sessions.
- Improvements in the teaching and assessment of reading, French and PE are showing in pupils' better progress in these subjects.
- Teachers are starting to build useful professional relationships with their peers in other schools which model outstanding practice. These relationships are starting to improve their classroom practice and assessment skills.
- Staff have positive and warm relationships with the pupils, who are eager to please their teachers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders and governors have always prioritised pupils' well-being. Leaders meet the social and emotional needs of pupils effectively. Trained staff work in specific areas, such as the Rainbow and Sunshine Rooms, to support pupils and their families. Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the positive impact their actions have had on the

well-being of pupils in the school.

- Pupils make a positive contribution to school life, their local community and beyond. An example of this is the fundraising by pupils for a national charity that is close to their hearts.
- Pupils are confident when speaking to visitors. They smile and say 'hello' when greeting them. Inspectors spoke to a number of pupils who said that they are happy at school and enjoy their learning.
- Staff provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take on areas of responsibility, for example as school councillors and house captains. Some pupils enjoy taking on the responsible role of looking after the younger children during playtime and consider it a privilege to do so.
- Leaders regularly seek the views and opinions of pupils. As part of a whole-school focus on improving reading, pupils were asked about their reading habits. As a result, leaders invested heavily in a wide range of good-quality fiction and non-fiction books. The improved library now attracts pupils and their parents and carers.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms that bullying can take. They said that bullying is rare and school records support this view. Pupils of all ages are confident that an adult in the school will help them to resolve any concerns that they may have.
- The school's Christian values are at the heart of the school. The trust, respect and understanding of different religions and cultures run through the school and are reflected in the positive relationships across the school.
- Pupils talk with pride about the debating society. A trained actor has prepared pupils well for an inter-school debate on the topic 'This house believes that the entire world should be vegetarian'.
- The breakfast club is well attended. Leaders use this time to promote reading after the pupils have eaten their breakfast. The deputy headteacher is currently reading 'How to Train Your Dragon' and, with the pupils, defines the meanings of unfamiliar words and answers questions about the text.
- Leaders use their links with the Children's University to develop individual pupils' talents. The extra-curricular clubs provide any number of opportunities for pupils to shine, such as netball, dodgeball, football, basketball, table tennis and gymnastics.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Relationships are good between pupils, and between pupils and staff. Pupils want to attend school and this is reflected in pupils' rates of attendance, which are in line with the national average. Leaders check attendance carefully and work with the families of pupils who are persistently absent. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing.
- In the last 18 months, leaders have ironed out the behaviour issues that they inherited. Logs show a dramatic reduction in incidents of poor behaviour. There are no longer any disruptions to lessons, and pupils are able to learn without distraction. Pupils are engaged even when the lessons do not challenge their learning effectively. Pupils are

ready to learn.

- Pupils treat each other, their teachers and other adults with courtesy and respect. They are polite and well mannered. Staff and pupils alike believe wholeheartedly in their school's mission statement 'Aim High, Dream Big'. The new leadership team is working hard to make sure that pupils can do this.
- The small number of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were positive about the school. One parent said: 'The school is putting 100% effort to give our children the best education in a safe and enjoyable environment.' Another felt that the school offers 'a well-maintained learning environment with a focus on positive attitudes to learning with others'.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Published data in 2016 showed that pupils' progress in reading and mathematics across key stage 2 was significantly below the national averages for all pupils, including the large proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Attainment of middle-ability pupils in reading, writing and mathematics was also well below the national average. In 2017, pupils' attainment was well below the national averages at both the expected standard and the higher standard by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 has been below the national average for the last two years. Fewer than 70% of pupils met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017. However, current information indicates signs of improvement, partly due to teachers' higher expectations of pupils.
- The progress that current pupils make across a number of subjects is not rapid enough to ensure that they are prepared well enough for secondary school. This is true for almost all groups, including those pupils who are disadvantaged and those who speak English as an additional language.
- A lack of challenge means that the most able pupils are not making the gains in learning of which they are capable. In contrast, the close support provided to those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities means that these pupils make better progress over time.
- Teachers' assessments and other standardised assessments are generous and do not match the school's published data. This is particularly true in writing. Pupils do not make enough progress in writing. Pupils' books show slow progress for almost all groups of pupils. All pupils are given the same work regardless of their abilities.
- There is a wide gap between the achievement of boys and girls in reading, writing, mathematics and science at key stages 1 and 2. Boys, especially middle-ability boys, do less well than girls. Leaders are starting to tackle this inequality.
- Some subjects across the curriculum, such as history, geography and science, are underdeveloped. Pupils have limited experience of practical science.
- Leaders have invested heavily in high-quality reading materials and they provide the necessary professional support for teachers. As a result, pupils' comprehension skills are improving. The reading books looked at by inspectors provide the evidence to support this. Subject leaders are building on pupils' skills and knowledge in music and

PE. As a result, these areas are current strengths of the school.

Early years provision

Good

- Early years provision is good because there has been a clear vision for its development by senior leaders. This is their area of expertise. Since September 2016, leaders and governors have successfully improved the provision in the early years. Leaders' considerable investment in staffing and resources ensures that the children get the best possible start at St Silas's. The early years team works well together as 'a family'.
- The early years leader and her team have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the early years. The early years leader uses information about children's progress effectively to provide activities that meet their individual needs. As a result, children make good progress from starting points which are typically lower than those expected for their age.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year increased in 2016 and 2017.
- The transition into key stage 1 is not as well developed as it could be. The early years leader is keen to initiate more transition activities in the summer term, so that the children are able to 'hit the ground running' in Year 1.
- Key workers have high expectations. They teach phonics well. Children use their phonics knowledge to develop their reading and writing skills. One child asked an inspector, 'Do you think before you write? Because we're told to do that.' Staff embed the features of good writing skills from an early age.
- Visiting authors introduced 'helicopter storytelling'. Children create a group story with their key worker, who models the skills of story-writing. They are then assigned acting roles and are captivated by their own performances.
- Communication with parents is good. Early years staff use a number of innovative ways to engage those parents who are hard to reach. They engage parents well and help them to develop ways of working with their children at home. Staff also keep parents well informed about their children's progress.
- The indoor and outdoor areas cater well for children's learning needs. The secret garden provides an 'enchanted' environment for children's imaginations to run riot. Activities excite and engage even the most reluctant learner.
- Appropriate links are made with other professionals to provide early help in areas such as speech and language and to provide support for the growing number of children who have SEN and/or disabilities who are entering the school.
- Safeguarding is effective in the early years. Staff training is up to date. All staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety and happiness of the children in their care.
- Children enjoy their time in the early years. A love of learning is fostered and children behave well, forming positive relationships with adults and their classmates.

School details

Unique reference number	132045
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10045178

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Munro
Headteacher	Mrs Michele Battersby
Telephone number	01254 698 447
Website	www.stsilasprimary.co.uk
Email address	michele.battersby@stsilas.blackburn.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 June 2013

Information about this school

- St Silas's CofE Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are of White British heritage is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are broadly in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is increasing. There are currently 15 pupils who have education, health and care plans.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.
- The school receives formal support brokered through the local authority. They are also supported by two groups of local schools.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed. There has also been a considerable change in teaching staff.

Information about this inspection

- Due to adverse weather conditions, one member of the inspection team was not able to attend on the second day of the inspection. After discussions with Ofsted and senior leaders of the school, it was agreed that the remaining two inspectors would complete the inspection.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in each class.
- Inspectors examined a range of pupils' work in mathematics, writing and from across the curriculum.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, both individually and during class activities.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally in groups and informally around school.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 11 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 22 staff who completed the staff survey.
- Inspectors made observations of pupils' behaviour during lessons, at playtimes and when pupils were moving around the school.
- Meetings were held with four governors, senior leaders, middle leaders, local authority representatives and a local leader of education.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and its areas for development.
- Inspectors looked at attendance and behaviour records.
- Inspectors reviewed the safeguarding documentation and considered how this related to daily practice, as well as speaking with staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

Julie Bather

Ofsted Inspector

Steve Bentham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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