

Great Marsden St John's Primary School A Church of England Academy

Trent Road, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 0NX

Inspection dates

22–23 May 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's strong commitment and drive, along with the support of her senior leadership team, have ensured that the school's focus on teaching and learning is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes across the school.
- Children get a good start to their education in the effective early years department. Teachers help the children settle and develop the skills needed for successful learning.
- Through key stage 1, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- At key stage 2 pupils are accelerating their progress in reading, writing and mathematics, which is now good. This is remedying the slow progress they made in the past.
- The quality of teaching is now strong and there is good practice to be shared. Teachers' planning does not always allow all pupils to be well challenged.
- A small proportion of the most able pupils are not consistently challenged across the school and not enough are supported effectively to achieve at the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported. They make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils are given opportunities to develop their English skills in subjects across the curriculum. However, the quality of their writing in history and geography is of a lesser standard.
- Pupils behave impressively well. They are highly self-confident, socially mature, caring individuals. This is a result of the leaders' carefully crafted approach to promoting pupils' personal development and welfare.
- Senior and middle leaders work hard for the benefit of all pupils. They are driving improvements in their areas of responsibility and this is raising standards across school. Staff are proud members of the school.
- Governors know the school well. They provide strong support and challenge for the school's leaders.
- The vast majority of parents and carers speak positively about the improvements made by the leadership team.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching so that more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan sessions that allow pupils to make the best use of time to make even better progress
 - sharing the strong teaching practice in the school and across the trust.
- Build on the improvements being made to ensure that more pupils achieve above the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.
- Providing more opportunities for pupils to write in history and geography and ensure that teachers check that it is of the same standard as the pupils write in their English books.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- There have been considerable changes in staffing since the inception of the academy, which have posed significant challenges. Nevertheless, the determination of the headteacher and governors to improve the quality of teaching and learning has paid dividends. Weaknesses have been addressed, and quality support continues to be provided where further improvement is expected.
- Leaders at all levels share the headteacher's drive and passion that the school should provide the very best for its pupils every day. Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They are aware of what still needs to be done to improve further. School plans set priorities that are tackled systematically and are resulting in good teaching, good personal development, behaviour and welfare, and improving pupils' outcomes.
- Senior leaders for English, mathematics and the curriculum check the quality of teaching thoroughly and set high standards. Leaders ensure that teachers use the school's teaching sequences consistently well and this is supporting good improvements in pupils' learning.
- Systems for managing the performance of staff are organised effectively. These systems ensure that teachers and learning support assistants are focused on the school's priorities. The headteacher is committed to developing the skills and expertise of all staff. Teachers and teaching assistants indicate that they benefit from effective training in a supportive, positive ethos.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is used successfully 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 to support their academic, social and emotional development. As a result, differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally have diminished over time.
- Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively and this is reflected in the good conduct of pupils. The leaders' deeply held values of diversity, tolerance, kindness and respect regularly feature in school assemblies. A display of pupils' work celebrated their diversity about faiths and families with statements such as, 'I am proud to be different.' Pupils learn about democracy through the work of the school council. The older pupils set an excellent example to the younger ones in the way they commit to fair play. These initiatives help to prepare pupils very well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders focus on the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics within the curriculum. They also provide a range of subjects that are enhanced by a variety of educational visits, which ensures that learning is a very enjoyable experience for pupils. However, leaders do not always ensure that all of the most able are provided with a curriculum to stretch them to the higher levels.
- Leaders have used the additional physical education and sport funding to increase the

range of sports available for pupils. Pupils are very appreciative of the wide range of clubs and sporting activities, such as football and tennis. Along with staff the pupils enjoy the 'Up and active' club. Pupils are made aware that their health and well-being are important.

- The school has worked effectively with Cidari Trust. Since the school joined the trust in March 2015, directors have taken appropriate strategic action to support the leadership. The trust respects the autonomy of the school leadership to drive the improvement of the school.
- The school's information indicates that leaders and governors have secured the confidence of parents. Responses to regular school questionnaires show that parents think that their children are safe, well looked after and that they learn well. As one parent said, 'St John's is a good school, the teachers are friendly and listen to parents.' Inspectors agree.

Governance of the school

- Following a period of turbulence, the governing body has recruited governors that have a range of expertise and skills. As a result, governors now provide an effective body that challenges and supports school leaders. Governors hold leaders to account for the performance of the school.
- Governors are well informed because they are provided with high-quality, detailed information by the headteacher and other senior leaders. Some governors take on responsibility for liaising with senior leaders on aspects of the school's provision, such as safeguarding, special educational needs, finance and the curriculum.
- They visit the school regularly and engage with senior leaders in monitoring teaching and learning. In addition, they have engaged in whole-school reviews evaluating aspects of the school's provision, such as the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum and provision for special educational needs. As a result, governors have a clear understanding about the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the information about pupils' achievement. They check that additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant, physical education and sport funding and funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, is spent wisely and is making a positive difference.
- The board of directors of the trust has established strategic vision for the school as a member of the trust. They are well informed about the school's effectiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' welfare is of the utmost importance to staff. The culture of the school is built on promoting pupils' safety, happiness and well-being.
- Leaders ensure a safe environment for pupils through regular and detailed risk assessments. Staff are vigilant in keeping pupils safe. The school's policies and procedures ensure that staff are well placed to spot concerns and act appropriately.

Where concerns are noted, designated senior leaders work closely with appropriate agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they need.

- Staff make themselves available throughout the school day and beyond to ensure that pupils and families receive the support they need. The school maintains an up-to-date and accurate record of all appointments.
- Leaders are very active to ensure that pupils understand their own role in ensuring that they keep themselves safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Classrooms are lively, exciting places where teachers present activities in interesting ways. Relationships between adults and pupils are particularly strong and contribute greatly to good learning and progress. Pupils want to succeed because they enjoy what they are doing. Teaching is improving, although the best practice is not shared to ensure that all benefit from the skills of others.
- In mathematics, teachers ensure that skills are taught in a logical way that builds on previous learning. Teachers ask pupils why they choose certain methods in their work. This enables pupils to apply their knowledge to solving problems systematically. This was evident in Year 6. These pupils were very skilled in using the correct technical language to describe their work in order to solve problems using shapes.
- The teaching of writing is an area that the school has worked hard to develop. Teachers use stimulating ideas so that pupils are keen to write and do so with great imagination. The good quality of written work in their English books is consistent in all classes throughout the school.
- Reading is improving and phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is taught effectively. This is helping, for example, readers in Year 2 to gain in confidence and fluency in reading. At key stage 2, reading has been prioritised by the school leaders. Teachers now provide daily reading sessions and check that pupils have access to a wide range of texts.
- The good ratio of adults to pupils makes a strong contribution to good learning because pupils get the support they need. Pupils who need to catch up are given effective support. The work of the adults who support those who have SEN and/or disabilities is of high quality. These pupils are given just the right level of support to help them gain the confidence to achieve well.
- Teachers ensure that learning is effective in a range of subjects. Pupils enjoy opportunities to explore and investigate. Year 6 cooperated well and made good progress in carrying out an experiment to explore the features of light in a study of refraction. Year 4 pupils used their iPad effectively to research information about Anglo-Saxon gods. While they enjoy these experiences, their teachers are keen to ensure that they engage in more history and geography work and improve their writing in these subjects.
- Sometimes teaching is less effective because on occasions teachers do not have high enough expectations, particularly in what they demand of their most able pupils at key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Sometimes work is too easy and pupils do

not always maximise the time they have to complete their work. This can limit the progress of some pupils, particularly the most able.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The leaders of the school place a strong emphasis placed on developing pupils' mental well-being. Pupils' social understanding and moral purpose is a significant strength of the school. It permeates all aspects of pupils' experience, ensuring that pupils develop skills, attitudes and dispositions that will enable them to make a highly positive contribution to society. The caring and inclusive culture of the school enables pupils to thrive.
- Pupils are self-confident and self-assured. They have a well-informed understanding of different religious beliefs and cultures. They show a deeply held respect for others and a genuine tolerance of people's different characteristics. Assemblies are a key feature in promoting the values of the school. During the inspection pupils reflected deeply on appreciating the ideas of others. They provided very mature contributions in a whole-school assembly.
- Pupils are aware of and know how to protect themselves from a range of dangers. For example, pupils are aware of the risks of using the internet and social media. They explain how to protect themselves online. Pupils know about their right to be safe from sexual abuse or exploitation and explain ways of recognising and reporting concerns.
- Pupils said that bullying is very rare. Where it has happened, it has been dealt with effectively. Pupils feel that they can talk to any member of staff if they have any worries. All the pupils spoken to during the inspection appreciated the 'worry boxes', which help them to grow in confidence.
- Pupils have many opportunities to take genuine responsibility and develop leadership skills. Their views are sought by leaders on many aspects of school life. The school council members show great maturity and understand their role to represent others.
- The daily dining experiences at lunchtimes, including a balanced diet, good hygiene and table manners, help pupils to understand the importance of healthy eating. Pupils benefit from a wide range of physical activities and learn about the importance of physical activity in their science lessons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils conduct themselves sensibly inside the school and in the playground, where they are closely supervised by adults.
- Pupils understand the teachers' expectations for their behaviour and the consequences for not behaving in a positive way. Pupils follow instructions and respond to adults' requests for calmness and orderliness.
- Pupils play happily together in the playground. They enjoy each other's company and

take care not to hurt or offend one another. The older pupils are always on hand to offer friendly help or advice if fallings-out do occur.

- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning and work cooperatively in most lessons. They value each other's points of view and help one another with their work. They listen to their peers and to adults and show consideration for views that may be different from their own. On occasions, particularly when teachers' planning restricts the involvement of pupils, some do not maximise their time on tasks to make the most of their learning opportunities.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their high rates of attendance, which are above the national average. Leaders have a robust system to check pupils' attendance. Where it is the case that pupils are finding attendance difficult, their absences are followed up swiftly on the first day and the school liaises with local authority agencies where there are concerns about absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils' work in books, in all year groups, shows that pupils across the school are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Lower-attaining pupils who need to catch up in order to achieve appropriate standards for their age are well catered for in lessons. There are an increasing number who arrive during the school year and some have little or no English. They receive effective additional support and, as a result, they catch up to where they should be.
- Pupils make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1, which is at the expected standard. This has been sustained over the last two years.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are rising. By the end of Year 6, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. An increasing number reach the standard expected for their age in 2017, which represents good progress, given pupils' starting points. A minority of pupils do not yet reach the highest levels of attainment of which they are capable in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Reading is a strength of the school. The younger pupils enjoy their phonics sessions and are achieving in line with the expected standard. Across the school, pupils read regularly and enthusiastically. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read fluently and with understanding.
- Pupils enjoy writing and an increasing number are achieving at the expected standard for their age.
- Pupils work hard in all classes to practise their basic mathematical skills and use them to solve mathematical problems. Leaders have prioritised the development of reasoning and many pupils can explain how they have worked out calculations, and why they have chosen certain approaches to solve. Progress in mathematics is good.
- The effective use of the pupil premium funding has diminished the differences that existed between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils. There is now little or no difference in the standards achieved by disadvantaged pupils in the school. As a result, difference have diminished with other pupils nationally.

- Analysis of the current work of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities shows that they make good progress from their individual starting points. They benefit from the effective support of teaching assistants, who ensure that their learning needs are met.
- Some of the most able pupils do not make as much progress as they could. They have underachieved in the past. Improved assessment systems now ensure that these pupils are identified, and leaders are currently working with teachers to plan lessons to challenge these pupils more effectively so that they make the rapid progress of which they are capable, especially in reading, writing and maths in key stage 2.
- Pupils develop good skills and understanding in science. By the end of key stage 2, they reach broadly average standards. Good-quality physical education experiences develop levels of teamwork, stamina and physical agility. Skills and understanding in other subjects, including history and geography, are not always as well advanced. Pupils do not write at their best standard in these subjects.

Early years provision

Good

- The quality of early years education has been sustained since the last inspection and remains good.
- Effective leadership in early years means that children get off to a good start in school. The early years leader has a good knowledge of the early years curriculum and knows the children well. Provision is effective because staff work hard to ensure that the provision meets children's needs as well as possible. As a result, children achieve well across all areas of learning.
- When pupils join the Reception class, many have weak skills compared to typical four-year-olds. The good teaching they receive ensures that they make strong progress. By the time they finish the Reception Year, most have reached the good level of development necessary to prepare them for the demands of Year 1.
- Children settle quickly in to school life because staff create a caring, nurturing, ordered environment. This helps children feel safe and confident. The well-established routines ensure that pupils learn quickly to behave well, to follow instructions, to take turns and to play sensibly together.
- Teachers work closely with parents to find out what children can and cannot do when they start school. Teachers review this continuously to build a picture of children's growing skills and interests. Teaching is planned carefully to take account of children's interests and to systematically build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. This is why all groups of children, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants guide and support children's learning skilfully. When they are working with a group, teachers direct children well to practise their reading, writing and number skills. When children are playing, adults keep an eye on what they are doing and listen to their conversations. When an opportunity arises, the adult interjects with a comment or a question that reinforces what children know or prompts them to think differently.
- Children are captivated by the exciting activities on offer. For example, during the

inspection, children developed some good language as they made soup out of leaves, soil and water in the outdoor area. With the support of one of their teachers, another group developed some precise language about insects. A small group demonstrated mature concentration in exploring capacity in the water area while their friends focused on counting onwards and backwards using numbers up to 20.

- Overall the early years environment provides a stimulating place for the children to learn.

School details

Unique reference number	141981
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10046608

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Daphne Durham
Headteacher	Michaela Underwood
Telephone number	01282 615055
Website	www.st-johns-nelson.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	bursar@st-johns-nelson.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school in England. It became an academy on 1 June 2015, sponsored by the Cidari Trust.
- The early years provision comprises a Reception class which children attend full time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for support through the pupil premium, is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not or believed not to be English is average and rising. An average proportion of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school met the government's current floor standards for 2017, which are the

minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

- There have been a number of changes in staffing, class organisation and governance since the previous

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons, covering all classes in the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also met four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. They met a group of pupils at lunchtime on the first day of the inspection. They also met the local authority school improvement partner and the CEO of Cidari Academy Trust.
- Inspectors examined in detail the quality of work in a wide range of books. They discussed pupils' work and their learning with them in lessons. Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading during guided reading sessions and talked to them about their reading.
- Inspectors talked to parents as they dropped their children off at school on the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered documents including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and information relating to pupils' achievement. They also considered documents outlining the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection, attendance and the arrangements for the use of the pupil premium funding and the primary physical education and sports funding.
- Inspectors took into account the school's own parental questionnaires. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no responses to the pupil and staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Chris Metcalfe

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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