

St Alban's Roman Catholic Primary School

Trinity St, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 5BN

Inspection dates 11–12 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although attainment is rising, pupils' achievement across the school is not yet consistently good.
- There has not been enough time for recent improvements to teaching to make a full impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Pupils do not always understand how to improve their work.
- The new system for checking and tracking pupils' progress has not yet been fully implemented.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 are not always confident in their reading.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise their reading and writing in other subjects.
- Although subject leaders have begun to assist in moving improvements forward, this development is at an early stage.

The school has the following strengths

- Staff have worked constructively with the temporary leaders. Improvements to the quality of teaching and achievement show that their efforts are starting to bear fruit.
- Pupils behave well, attend regularly and are happy and secure in school.
- Governors have helped the school to improve.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language are supported well throughout the school.
- The school provides a bright and welcoming learning environment.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons and made a number of short visits to lessons. They listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6. They also observed the teaching of phonics (the links between letters and the sounds that they make) in the Reception class and Year 1.
- Meetings were held with three members of the governing body, with staff, a group of pupils and a representative from the local education authority.
- Inspectors considered seven responses to Parent View (the online parent questionnaire). They also reviewed the school's summary of the results of a survey of parents' views conducted earlier this term.
- They took into account the views staff expressed in the questionnaire they completed.
- They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance and data on pupils' current progress.

Inspection team

Diane Auton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is similar in size to most other primary schools.
- The school serves a culturally diverse community. While the majority of pupils are White British, a substantial number of pupils are from Asian or African heritages, with around a quarter from British Pakistani families. A small but increasing number are from Eastern European backgrounds. Over a third of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils needing extra help is greater than that found in most schools. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional funding is well above average.
- The school meets the government 'floor standards', which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement.
- The school provides a breakfast club every day during term time.
- Most children start school in the Nursery class. Each year, however, a small number join the school for the first time in the Reception class.
- Since its previous inspection, the school has experienced a period of disruption. After a succession of temporary leadership arrangements over the last four terms, an associate headteacher is now leading the school. The governing body is currently in the process of recruiting a new headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching so that all pupils make good progress by:
 - ensuring that marking consistently provides pupils with clear guidance about what they need to do to improve their work, especially in mathematics and topic books
 - developing the reliable use of individual learning targets, in order to help pupils understand what the next steps in their learning should be
 - ensuring that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to practise and develop their skills in reading and writing when they are working in other subjects.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on achievement and the quality of teaching, by:
 - ensuring that the new systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress provide a clear overview for all staff and for governors of how well pupils are doing from term-to-term and across the year
 - ensuring that the school's new literacy scheme is matched closely to pupils' needs, in order to speed up progress, especially in reading in Key Stage 1
 - giving subject leaders a greater role in checking the quality and impact of teaching and the progress pupils make.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because it is currently inconsistent. Better teaching speeds up the rates of progress. Pupils apply themselves well in lessons and show interest in their work. They work well with a partner or in a group and are learning to discuss and share ideas sensibly. For example, in a good mathematics lesson in Year 6, pupils worked successfully with a partner in drawing a plan for a football stadium and calculating its costs.
- Children's skills are below expected levels for their age when they join the school in the Nursery or Reception classes. They settle into the Early Years Foundation Stage quickly, progress well and become keen learners. Those who are learning to speak English as an additional language make a good start because of the effective support they are given.
- As the result of recent improvements in teaching, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was broadly average in 2012. This represented a considerable improvement for the school, as attainment had been significantly below average in the past.
- In 2012, attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 was lower than in writing and mathematics. To tackle this, the school has introduced a new literacy scheme that includes a strong emphasis on developing a good understanding of the sounds that letter make. This is starting to speed up progress but some pupils do not have the skills to enable them to read new or unfamiliar words with confidence.
- Pupils in the current Years 4, 5 and 6 began Key Stage 2 with low starting points and the school knows that pupils have a great deal of 'catching up' to do. Although progress in lessons is improving, as the result of better teaching, the work in pupils' books shows that there is more to do for their achievement to become consistently good.
- In 2012, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was broadly average, representing a significant improvement on the previous year's outcomes. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in English and mathematics also increased significantly in 2012 and was in line with national averages. Pupils in Year 6 read well and enjoy reading.
- Across the school, the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and of pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language is in line with their peers, as a result of the good support they receive.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, the quality of teaching has been inconsistent and this is the main reason why pupils' achievement is not yet good. Some recent improvements have taken place but they have not yet had a full impact on learning.
- Teaching was good in the majority of the lessons seen. Effective features included good planning, with activities that engaged pupils' interests well, a brisk pace of learning and good teamwork between teachers and classroom assistants.
- There is some constructive and helpful marking but the school's revised marking policy is not yet being implemented consistently across classes and subjects. This means that pupils do not always know how to improve their work. Marking in mathematics and in topic work was often less effective than in literacy.
- Some work has begun to introduce the use of individual learning targets, but these are not consistently applied across classes and subjects. Although teachers usually explain to pupils what they are expected to learn by the end of a lesson, they do not always make clear links between what pupils already know and can do and what they need to do next in order to move their learning forward.
- The learning and progress of pupils with special educational needs are checked carefully. The school works well with a range of agencies to ensure appropriate support for this group of pupils. The well-trained teaching assistants work with the special educational needs coordinator

to provide a range of different types of support, in the classroom and in small group work. As a result, the achievement of pupils in this group is at least in line with others of the same age and is often good in relation to their abilities and starting points.

- Good support for pupils who speak English as an additional language is provided by experienced staff in school, with additional help from local authority services. This means that pupils from Eastern European countries who arrive at the school speaking very little English make good progress in learning it.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Good behaviour is supported by warm and trusting relationships between pupils and staff. An older pupil commented that 'This school helps you learn how to get along with other people and that's important for your future.' Those around him readily agreed.
- Pupils comply well with the school's simple code of conduct. They show politeness, care and consideration for others in their behaviour in lessons and around the school. The well-attended breakfast club gets the school day off to a happy start.
- All the parents responding to the school's own survey and to Parent View showed were confident that the school cares for their children and keeps them safe. A very small number of parents expressed concerns about behaviour management. The inspection team found that behaviour is good across the school and that it is managed well by the staff.
- In a discussion with an inspector, pupils showed a good awareness and understanding of different types of bullying. They said that, should such problems arise, they know that staff are there to help and would deal with it promptly. They showed sensitivity to others' needs, saying that they understand that some people may sometimes need help to manage their anger.
- Pupils play their part in helping the school run smoothly and look after each other well. The school council has an influential voice, gathering and representing pupils' views diligently. Older pupils act as monitors and as reading buddies to younger ones.
- Attendance has improved over the past year and is currently in line with the national average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The deputy headteacher's leadership skills and her successful collaboration with successive associate headteachers have been key factors in maintaining staff's resilience and in bringing about the recent improvements in results. Throughout this difficult time, the effective promotion of equal opportunities has been sustained and any form of discrimination has been robustly challenged.
- With the support of the local authority and external consultants, the associate headteachers and the deputy headteacher have improved the methods for checking on quality of teaching and pupils' progress. are scrutinised. As a result the school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is largely accurate.
- Other staff, including subject leaders, are also starting to check on how well subjects are taught and how much progress pupils are making. However, there is still more to do to involve them fully in driving improvements.
- Careful checking of teaching, combined with an effective programme of continuous professional development, has brought about improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The local educational authority has maintained an accurate overview of developments at the school, providing valuable advice and support to staff and governors. This has helped the school to make improvements to teaching and to pupils' learning and progress.
- Pupils' progress is assessed and tracked each term. A new system has been introduced to record and analyse how well pupils are doing, but there has not yet been enough time for the school to implement the system fully.
- Information about progress is reviewed on a class by class basis. It is not yet fully shared by all

staff or with governors and this limits their overview of pupils' progress through the year and across the school.

- Extra funding has been used effectively to provide additional learning and personal support for pupils eligible for free school meals. The school provides sensitive and effective support for pupils who are potentially vulnerable. Individualised support ensures that pupils with social, emotional or behavioural needs are fully included and enabled to learn and progress successfully.
- Staff have started to bring subjects together into topics and themes that are relevant and interesting for pupils. The newly introduced commercial literacy scheme is also under review to ensure it meets pupils' needs. However, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to practise and develop their skills in reading and writing when they are working in other subjects.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors carry out their legal duties effectively. They ensure that procedures for safeguarding pupils are well managed and reviewed regularly.
 - Governors' understanding of teaching quality and of pupils' achievement has become more detailed over recent time. This has improved their ability to hold the school to account.
 - Governors have helped to steer the school through a difficult period. They have managed the school's budget with care and have worked closely with the local authority and the diocese's education officers to ensure the smooth running of the school. They have also overseen a comprehensive programme of refurbishments to the school building.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119706
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	401865

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Jude Harrison
Headteacher	Noreen Collins (acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2010
Telephone number	01254 57582
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