

St Columba's RC Primary School

Ripley Street, Tonge Moor, Bolton, Lancashire, BL2 3AR

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make outstanding progress in this warm and friendly school. Many pupils of all abilities achieve more than is expected nationally in both English and mathematics.
- Children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage which provides a bright and stimulating environment and many exciting activities.
- Pupils continue to make high levels of progress throughout the school as a result of teaching which is consistently at least good and very often outstanding. However, mathematics teaching does not always give pupils sufficient opportunities to use logic and reasoning skills to solve problems.
- Pupils are very well-prepared for the next stage of their learning. Their attainment is above the national average. They have inquiring minds and are enthusiastic readers.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is outstanding.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieve very well. There is very little difference in their attainment and that of other pupils.
- Teachers meet pupils' needs exceptionally well as lessons are carefully planned so that pupils of all abilities have activities which provide appropriate levels of challenge.
- Marking is much improved since the previous inspection. It is of a high quality throughout the school and makes it very clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work. This contributes much to the achievement of all pupils.
- Teaching assistants generally provide excellent support. They are particularly sensitive to the emotional needs of the pupils.
- Each pupil is looked after very well and there is a strong caring ethos which underpins the daily life of the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in class, on the playground and in the dining hall. Very positive attitudes towards learning were observed in a wide range of lessons.
- The headteacher has been in post for a year and she has made a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. She is very well-supported by senior leaders, middle leaders, governors and a highly cohesive teaching team.
- Governors have a very accurate picture of the school's performance and are actively involved in the school's pursuit of excellence.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 10 teachers. An observation was undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' exercise books.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, senior leaders, and managers responsible for leading specific subjects. They also spoke to other staff, pupils and parents.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation to help gain an accurate view of its performance, safeguarding information, the school development plan, governing body minutes, local authority reports, behaviour records and displays around the school.
- Inspectors looked at the ways in which the school checks the progress of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the 23 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and also took account of the views that staff expressed in 12 completed questionnaires.

Inspection team

Desmond Stubbs, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila O'Keefe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is average and the proportion with English as an additional language is just below that usually found.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average. In this school the pupil premium applies almost entirely to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority).
- The school meets the current government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has recently been awarded the Leading Parent Partnership Award and the full International School Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more mathematics teaching is outstanding by increasing opportunities for pupils to use logic and reasoning skills to solve problems.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding in relation to their starting points. They make outstanding progress across the school and attainment is above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Almost all children start in the Nursery class with skills below and frequently well below those typical for their age. They make good and often outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and leave the reception class with levels of attainment generally in line with national expectations and ready for Year 1.
- Pupils' reading skills are developed very well across the school. Children are given an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the end of Year 1 the proportion of pupils who meet the required standard in the phonics (letters and sounds) screening check is very high. Children read regularly, display strong phonics skills and improve rapidly over time so that pupils' achievement in reading is well above average by the time they leave Year 6.
- By the end of Key Stage 1 standards are rising. More pupils are now reaching the higher levels expected of this age.
- The most-able pupils are challenged well and make good and often outstanding progress.
- The progress that pupils make in Key Stage 2 is outstanding in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected progress in all subjects is high compared to national averages. Pupils are extremely well-prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Equality of opportunity is highly effective. All groups of pupils make outstanding progress from their different starting points. This was observed in many lessons and can be seen in pupils' exercise books and in the school's achievement data.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress and their attainment is above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school allocates the pupil premium government funding highly effectively providing pupils eligible for a free school meal with additional support enabling them to make outstanding progress. By the end of Key Stage 2 the attainment of free school meal pupils is similar to that of others pupils in English and they are actually two terms ahead in mathematics.
- Parents are entirely satisfied with the progress their children are making at the school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding right across the school and this ensures that pupils make outstanding progress. High quality teaching was observed during the inspection and pupils' work in books shows that this is the case throughout the year in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Highly effective support from all the adults enables children to explore with confidence and develop self-esteem. Excellent resources are used to enrich children's experiences and develop their interests. The strong relationships seen in these classes continue to be evident throughout the rest of the school.
- In all lessons teachers display high expectations. They plan very challenging work which is carefully matched to the different abilities of pupils in the class. In a Year 5 class, for example, more-able pupils thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of finding the square root of three-digit numbers. This careful planning has a significant impact on the progress that pupils make in lessons.
- A strong feature of teaching is that no time is wasted. Learning moves at a brisk pace. A Year 4 mathematics lesson began with one group of pupils working independently while the teacher and teaching assistant worked with different groups. Very quickly everybody was busy and

purposefully engaged.

- Marking has much improved since the previous inspection. A Year 6 pupil explained how the marking 'Helps you understand what you have got wrong and gives you the next steps to think about'. This was evident in all the pupils' books. Pupils receive clear guidance on how they can improve their work and time is given in lessons for all pupils to consider teachers' comments. This is consistent across the school and further strengthens pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The teaching of basic skills is good and much is outstanding. In mathematics however, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use their logic and reasoning skills by solving puzzles and problems.
- Teaching assistants are generally highly effective. They work with groups of different abilities both in and out of the classroom and these groups make good and often outstanding progress. They are particularly skilled at working with those pupils who have social and emotional needs.
- Again, parents are pleased with the quality of teaching their children receive.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding.
- Pupils love coming to school. They are greeted with a warm welcome from their teachers and these positive relationships permeate the whole school day. Pupils are polite and courteous to one another and this was evident in class, whether working with a teacher or teaching assistant.
- On the playground a wide range of equipment enables the pupils to enjoy a safe and interesting playtime. Pupils say they feel happy and safe. After play they return to class in an orderly fashion. In the dining hall there is a very good social atmosphere with pupils enjoying each other's company. Bullying is very rare indeed.
- All behaviour incidents are recorded and the learning mentor evaluates class behaviour each day. Records are well-maintained and appropriate action is taken to improve practice when necessary.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility; for example in Breakfast Club one pupil explained 'Washing my dishes helps me to be more responsible'.
- Assigned key workers help the pupils understand how to stay safe, for example when using the Internet and this is another special feature of how this school cares for its pupils.
- Attendance is now in line with the national average following intensive work to promote regular attendance and punctuality.
- Parents agree that their children are happy, safe and that school makes sure that pupils behave well. One parent said, 'This is the best school - my children are very happy here.'

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has been in post for just over a year and during that time she has made a significant impact on all aspects of school life. She has motivated the school community and the pursuit of excellence shared by staff and governors is relentless.
- Central to the school's outstanding achievement are the systems the school has in place to check the performance of teachers and the progress being made by pupils. The school takes highly effective action in identifying pupils who need additional support and these targeted programmes help them to make rapid progress.
- Movement up the pay scale is carefully reviewed and linked to the national standards, the career stage of the teacher and the progress made by the pupils in their class. Teachers are held to account but they are also supported extremely well by senior leaders to achieve their challenging performance targets.
- Teachers have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills. All staff had subject leader training and are involved in ways to improve teaching, learning and achievement. Teachers

benefit from very good quality training and they are reflective practitioners, very willing to share their practice and learn from their colleagues.

- Pupils learn and make outstanding progress because the curriculum is well-designed to give pupils opportunities to develop their basic skills across the curriculum. The curriculum is further enriched with extra-curricular activities which are much enjoyed by all pupils.
- The school is highly effective in developing pupils' spirituality. This pervades the whole school and is evident in the close links with the church and through assemblies and class worship. The outstanding behaviour of pupils shows their understanding of right and wrong. Pupils work and play together extremely well. Cultural education is very strong and the school has the full International School Award.
- In the past year much has been done to further develop engagement with parents. This work culminated in the Leading Parent Partnership Award. Parents are very positive about the school and 100% of those who responded to the on-line questionnaire would recommend the school to another parent.
- Primary school sport funding has enabled the school to increase levels of participation and improve equipment greatly. A highly effective dance and gymnastics teacher is now employed and 40 more pupils are accessing an after-school Dance Club each week.
- The local authority provides a light touch support for this outstanding school.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very knowledgeable and well-informed about all areas of school life, including the quality of teaching. This is due to the high quality information that senior leaders provide and also the proactive way they go about their duties. The governors understand the school because they check the pupils' books, visit school and see it in action. The achievement of pupils is at the heart of all their discussions. They also receive regular training and senior leaders share best practice with them. Governors understand how the performance of teachers is managed and how targets are agreed which are dependent upon where the teacher is in their career and that progression up the pay scale is not automatic. The budget is well-managed. Governors ensure that pupil premium funding is used appropriately and they evaluate the impact it has. This is a highly effective governing body.

What inspection judgements mean

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	105220
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	426222

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	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rebecca Berry
Headteacher	Kath Baker
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2008
Telephone number	01204 333421
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