

Oswaldtwistle St Paul's CE (VA) Primary School

Union Road, Oswaldtwistle, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 3DD

Inspection dates 15–16 January 2014

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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils do not make good progress in all classes. Standards are below average in writing and close to average in mathematics by the time pupils leave Year 6.
- Teaching is not always effective in ensuring pupils learn as much as they can and so extend their skills and knowledge.
- The most able pupils do not make enough progress because their work is not always hard enough.
- Activities in some lessons do not capture pupils' imagination and so they do not produce enough of their best work.
- The role of subject leader is not fully established. Some of their plans for future developments lack the precision needed to show how actions will raise progress and attainment.

The school has the following strengths

- Progress is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children settle well.
- Pupils make good progress in reading to reach the level expected for their age.
- Behaviour is good and a small number of pupils who find it difficult to control their actions are managed very well.
- The nurture groups are just one example of how well the school cares for pupils. They say they feel safe and are happy in school.
- Effective leadership from the headteacher and governors has restored order and an atmosphere conducive to learning.
- Teaching and achievement are improving because thorough monitoring tells teachers what they need to do to make their teaching better.
- Governors are very aware of changes in the school. Along with the headteacher, they do not shirk difficult decisions. The school is moving forward at a brisk pace now it has an ethos where staff and pupils can flourish.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes and visited 11 lessons and parts of lessons. She visited the nurture room and observed the support given to those needing extra help.
- Discussions were held with staff, pupils, members of the governing body, the local authority officer overseeing attendance and a member of the local authority linked with the school.
- Pupils read to the inspector.
- Pupils' work was analysed with a focus on writing in Years 2 and 6.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, the evaluations of its performance, data on pupils' progress and information about safeguarding.
- The views of 19 parents were analysed through the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Other parents shared their opinions about the school as they dropped their children off at the start of the day.
- Twenty-five responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

Jennifer Platt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. An above average proportion has English as an additional language, although few are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is in line with the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A well above average proportion (60%) of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- More pupils than is usual start and leave at different times during the year.
- The proportion of pupils from Romany or Gypsy community and pupils from Traveller families of Irish heritage is well above average.
- The government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics do not apply in this school.
- The headteacher has changed from the associate headteacher to the executive headteacher since the previous inspection and now spends more time in the school. The deputy headteacher and several teachers are new to the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and increase the rate of progress in writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring activities captivate pupils' interests and lead them on to produce more of their best work
 - checking that work is pitched at a level that enables pupils to achieve well, especially the most able
 - making sure that pupils have the guidance they need to apply their improving mathematical skills to solve problems
 - improving pupils' accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Embedding the role of subject leaders so that they use more effectively their increasing information about their subjects to inform their action plans.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The results of national tests indicate that in the past attainment has been low although rising steadily. Except for a dip in Year 6 last year the trend to improve has continued. Small numbers in each year lead to a complicated picture of progress because one pupil can represent a high percentage of the total. This was evident in the results of the 2013 national tests for Year 6, where the cohort was very small and a high proportion were assessed as having special educational needs. However, it is clear looking at progress and data over time and in all years, that an increasing number now make expected progress from their starting points. However, achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils make good progress.
- Attainment in writing is below average at the end of Years 2 and 6 although the majority make the progress expected of them. Teaching has extended successfully pupils' skills to write in different styles. For example, older pupils' books show they can present a good argument to ban smoking. However, pupils are not always enthused about their tasks and work lacks the imaginative vocabulary needed to reach higher levels. Teachers do not always remind pupils to apply their skills in punctuation and grammar and errors in their work remain.
- A more active approach to teaching letters and sounds is reaping benefits in a rise to average attainment in the Year 1 reading assessment. This is accelerating pupils' reading skills but they are not making full use of their skills to improve their spelling.
- Attainment in mathematics is rising and is much closer to average in Years 2 and Year 6. Overall progress is secure and accelerates especially in Year 6 where pupils are set harder work. Pupils throughout the school struggle to use their knowledge to apply their skills to solve problems. For older pupils a legacy of weaker teaching has left gaps in their knowledge and some lack the confidence to manipulate numbers and check that their answers make sense.
- The most able pupils do not always make good progress and not enough pupils reach above the level expected of them for age in writing and mathematics. Work does not always enable them to grapple with tasks that will provide the skills and knowledge needed to reach the higher levels.
- Progress in reading is good throughout the school. Pupils in Year 2 read accurately although not always with expression. Pupils in Year 6 have favourite authors and identify them as 'not boring' and 'stories usually have a happy ending'.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress from a starting point that is well below that expected for their age. Many have limited social and language skills and the rich experiences they meet give them the confidence and skills needed to improve. Overall attainment is slightly below the expected level at the end of the Reception Year.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the progress expected of them. Teaching assistants often offer positive support to make activities enjoyable, such as acting out actions for rhyming words, although enough time for pupils to extend their skills, especially in having 'a go' at writing for themselves, is not always provided.
- The majority of pupils from minority ethnic groups are not at the early stages of speaking English. Parents told the inspector they are happy with the help provided for their children. These pupils make similar progress to others. As pupils get older, the classroom displays include many key words from different subjects and this helps pupils to approach their work confidently.
- The pupils from the Gypsy Roma community overall make the same progress as other pupils, although those who do not attend regularly need help to close the gaps in their skills and knowledge.
- There is no significant difference in the progress of those eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils. This includes those known to be eligible for free school meals. Low numbers mean attainment in national tests cannot be reported. However, school data of current pupils shows their attainment is below average in writing and mathematics and average in reading. The gap in their attainment to reach the expected level is closing because teaching is more settled and

consistency in approaches established. This reflects the effective promotion of equality of opportunity for most pupils, although the most able do not always move on at a rapid enough pace.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although good teaching was observed, there are aspects of teaching that do not ensure effective learning. The many changes in staff, as weaker teaching has been resolved, has unavoidably limited improvement as new teachers adjust to different procedures and learn what is expected of them. This leads to teaching requiring improvement and a rise and fall in progress between years.
- Too often, the interest of pupils wanes because tasks do not capture their imagination or have not been explained clearly and they become confused. Teachers often provide lists for pupils of what they will do in lessons and this helps pupils to understand how the lesson will proceed. However, pupils are less clear about what they are expected to learn. For example, they were unclear about the advantage of making a sentence longer and how will this improve their writing.
- Tasks do not always allow pupils to perform to the best of their ability. On some occasions, teachers give too much advice or when working in collaboration with the class do not take on board the pupils' ideas. The most able pupils are not always deepening their understanding when they have to complete easier work before arriving at tasks that stretch their learning. In the Years 3/4 class, pupils enjoyed underlining short sentences in a given text and discussion showed they clearly understood how these added tension to the text. However, the task was too easy for the most able who failed to give enough thought to writing their own short, exciting sentences. As a result, their learning was superficial in comparison to what they could achieve.
- On the other hand, pupils in Year 6 were captivated from the minute the lesson started with the idea of how authors use language to 'grab' the reader's attention. They thoroughly enjoyed spotting that 'a loud shouter, rain hater, sum ticker' was their teacher. Pupils' interest did not waver because a variety of strategies kept them on their toes and it was no surprise that progress was rapid and they produced some imaginative writing.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Training has improved teachers' skills in teaching letters and sounds and small group activities enable pupils to learn through actions. Older pupils learn well in class sessions where reading is the focus. Some read a shared text as a group, others research while others just enjoy time for a quiet read.
- Pupils extend their basic skills in mathematics because introductions include rapid mental calculations that are raising quickly pupils' basic skills. In Year 6, the quick-fire test on their multiplication tables tested some pupils to the limit to recall this essential information. Pupils are unsure of the skills needed to tackle problems because teachers do not have a uniform approach to this to ensure that approaches taught in one year are followed through in the next.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective because staff have good knowledge of how these children learn. Children absorb new knowledge especially through role play, such as being at the train station. This includes effective use of the limited outdoor space.
- Marking has improved because staff follow the school's systems. Pupils know that at the beginning of lessons time is allocated to check previous work. Books show their positive responses to comments about spelling errors and additional sums completed if they had made mistakes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good.
- The headteacher's focus on improving behaviour has been relentless. It is made very clear to

pupils the importance of rising to the level of behaviour expected and the importance of abiding by the school's rules. As a result, the behaviour of the vast majority is good.

- At play, many are energetic and make effective use of the equipment available. Support for boys playing football allows them to channel their energies in a purposeful manner. Pupils do fall out, often over a game, but this is usually sorted out amicably.
- In lessons, behaviour is good and the majority show good attitudes to learning. Pupils appreciate humour in lessons. For example, in a Year 2 lesson when the teacher used a mask and pretended to be a character in their story. At other times, pupils are less inspired by what they are asked to do and behaviour goes off the boil and chatting is not related to their work. In the collective worship, behaviour was impeccable. This is a complete turnaround from previous years and the respect between staff and pupils has been restored.
- The approach to the small core, often newcomers from other schools, who have difficulty managing their behaviour is firm and supportive. Staff spend time with pupils rationalising their behaviour but are also very aware when the time comes to be tough and say 'enough is enough'. As a result, records show many settle well and take advantage of all the school offers.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The nurture groups and role of the learning mentor are crucial to helping those who are more vulnerable. Pupils know how to look after themselves and discuss how they have been taught about the dangers of drugs and smoking. They take on the messages delivered in anti bullying week and are aware of different types of bullying including the use of the internet. They shared with the inspector examples of how name calling and their actions can upset others. They feel racism is not a problem in their school and know how to obtain help when needed.
- Pupils who met with the inspector were very happy about their daily life in school. They talked openly about the improvements and that the school is a much better place for them. It was a delight to watch the older pupils in their red tabards helping staff at dinner time and playing with those who needed a friend.
- It is not surprising that attendance has improved and is now broadly average. Procedures are followed to the letter and success has been achieved by staff bending over backwards to support families who now not only check children attend well but also help in the school.
- One pupil described the school as 'a really hard working school, the teachers are really nice and it is like a gift to be here'. Lovely words to sum up the changes and friendly ethos now prevalent in the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, staff and governors have worked tirelessly to improve behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning. There are no delusions about the way ahead but now that a climate for learning prevails the platform to move forward is far more secure. The school has an accurate view of current strengths and what needs to improve and the energy of leaders, governors and staff means that the school is well placed to move forward.
- Monitoring of teaching is both rigorous and accurate. The high level of teaching expected is made very clear to staff. This has led to several changes in staffing as weaker teaching has been eradicated. Currently, teaching is improving but is not yet securely good because half the staff are new to the profession and are still acquiring the tools of their trade. Effective support is ensuring they are gaining in confidence at a rapid pace.
- Close tracking of pupils' progress now produces a wealth of accurate data about pupils' achievement. This is used effectively to offer support where it is most needed and the impact is obvious in rising progress especially in reading. Information is also used to measure teachers' success in ensuring pupils make as much progress as possible. After a gentle introduction for teachers about their accountability for the progress of pupils in their class, the process is now much sharper and staff know they must explain any dips or lack of progress. This is leading to more discussion and sharing of skills as staff decide on the actions needed to tackle any lack of

progress.

- Teachers have targets based on their performance. Year on year the number of pupils expected to reach and exceed the average for their age is raised. Salary rewards are linked to achievement of these targets.
- The school's improvement plan includes accurate priorities with the focus on achievement and teaching. Although this document is long it does show a clear path of actions to improve the school. Subject leaders play a part in this planning but the future plans they draw up for their subjects lack precision and it is unclear how actions will raise attainment.
- The curriculum keeps pupils in touch with their heritage such as learning about Ireland and Pakistan. Clubs and visitors extend skills. Residential visits to Edinburgh and London expand pupils' horizons as well as their social skills.
- The new primary school sports funding is being used astutely. Initially it is capturing pupils' desire to participate in sport. Observations of them involved in circuit training activities showed an appreciation of keeping healthy. The next step planned is to extend teachers' skills to sustain this enthusiasm.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved dramatically. From a prior report that identified a lack of a Christian ethos the school has made a complete turnaround. In an act of collective worship pupils celebrated their faith in discussion, prayer and amazing singing.
- The confidence of parents has been restored and number on roll is rising. Parents can rest assured that this school is improving and safe for their children.
- The school has gained a reputation of excellence for its support for the Gypsy Roma community. Parents interact with the school and share their traditions. The arrival of a vardo (traditional caravan) was met with great excitement by all.
- The school has received effective support and advice from the local authority. The initial plan to put in an associate headteacher and then extend this to an executive role allowing the headteacher more time in school has been pivotal to bringing about improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely well informed about what is happening in school. They are linked to subjects and classes so that their knowledge is based not only on detailed information from the headteacher but also first-hand experiences. Data on achievement and test results are scrutinised. A discussion with a large number of governors showed their thorough understanding of the reasons for the dip in 2013 and the current improvements. Governors ask challenging questions about progress and are determined to regain lost ground. They play a crucial role in improving teaching. Working alongside the headteacher, they have carried out the difficult task of eradicating weaker teaching. Now they check that teachers are set challenging targets and that salary rewards are linked closely to achieving the expected results.
 - Financial management is efficient and governors identified a long list of activities funded by the pupil premium. They recognise the importance of providing for pupils' social as well as academic needs and know that many of these pupils benefit from support in the nurture groups and the help from the learning mentor. The Chair of the Governing Body has travelled the journey of change with the school and shows great determination that the school will not return to the ethos he inherited. Current evidence of a happy and caring school supports the action of this determination.

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	119451
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	430966

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev John Holland
Headteacher	Mrs Joan Smith
Date of previous school inspection	29 May 2012
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