

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School Stockport

Roman Road, Heaton Norris, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 1RF

Inspection dates 18–19 February 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This school has improved since its last inspection. Senior leaders have made improvements in the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and in the way in which they lead and manage the school.
- Most pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, now make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is improving rapidly.
- Teaching is now typically good. Most teachers ask probing questions and check pupils' understanding regularly in lessons.
- Pupils attend school regularly and are very polite to their classmates and adults. They feel safe, behave well and have good attitudes to learning.
- Governors rigorously check on pupils' progress and hold leaders to account for accelerating their progress.
- Senior leaders have created an inclusive, vibrant learning environment where pupils have a wide range of creative topics and activities that interest them in most lessons.
- Pupils' books are marked regularly with colour-coded, detailed feedback from teachers that provides good advice to help them improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small minority of teaching require improvement.
- Pupils' progress in writing is not yet as good as it is in reading and mathematics.
- Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not plan carefully enough the development of skills through the activities that are available for children to choose to do each day.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons with the headteacher.
- Behaviour was observed in lessons and around the school at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, middle leaders, pupils, the school improvement advisor and governors.
- The inspector considered parents' views of the school through informal discussions during the inspection and the 15 recent responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as 12 staff questionnaire responses.
- The inspector listened to some pupils in Key Stage 2 read and gained their views on teaching and other aspects of school.
- The inspector examined a number of documents, including those relating to the local authority's involvement with the school, minutes of governing body meetings and information on pupils with special educational needs. They looked at attendance figures and pupils' work.

Inspection team

Barbara Flitcroft, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Around 44% of pupils are eligible for additional support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children looked after by the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and the children of service families. This figure is well above average.
- Around five per cent of the pupils speak English as an additional language. This proportion is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is at least good and a greater proportion is outstanding by:
 - modelling the good and outstanding practice that already exists in school
 - encouraging subject leaders to undertake observations of colleagues teaching, so they are better informed of how their subjects are being taught throughout the school and how opportunities for pupils to write can be included in the different subjects
 - enabling pupils to reflect on their work and to accurately explain their new learning.
- Further develop the improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - planning a more appropriate balance of directed and child-initiated activities and ensuring that every opportunity is used to move children's learning forward
 - providing opportunities for children to use and apply the new skills they have learned in the adult-directed sessions in their independently chosen activities within the indoor and outdoor learning spaces
 - ensuring that children have a wider range of experiences both in and out of doors that will maximise their development
 - moving children's learning on as soon as they are ready.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is now good. Most pupils make good progress through the school in reading and mathematics. They do not do quite as well in writing, although this is improving due to initiatives created by senior leaders, such as the Bear project when the school's well-loved mascot teddy retired and a new bear was chosen. This generated huge amounts of purposeful writing across the school.
- Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are below and sometimes well below levels expected for their age in all areas of learning. Children make good progress because they are given many opportunities to practise what they know. However, new learning is not introduced in every teaching session, even when pupils are ready for that next step, and this limits the amount of progress made. Children are very well behaved and listen intently to the staff.
- Most children continue into Year 1 with attainment that is below their peers nationally. Pupils' attainment in the Year 1 national phonics check (linking of letters and sounds) has improved dramatically over the last two years, from well below to in line with the national average, as a result of changes made by senior leaders, including high quality training for teachers.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is closer to but still below the national average.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with that of other pupils nationally and sometimes above. Pupils in year groups throughout the school are making good progress and the vast majority are on track to reach the national average or above. A rich range of additional group work helps those who have difficulty with their learning to make rapid progress.
- The most able pupils make very good progress. Teachers sometimes pair these pupils with those who need extra support which helps both of these groups of pupils to develop both academic and social skills. The school promotes equality of opportunity well.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers because of the high quality small group support by teachers and additional adults. Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, attain and progress at least as well as their peers.
- The work that pupils produce in their books shows that, over time, they make good progress and there is an interesting range of learning opportunities to enthuse pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is typically good because, as well as making the aims of the lesson very clear, teachers guide pupils through detailed instructions about how to achieve these aims. Work is suitably matched to the ability of the different groups of pupils in each class. Teachers, the highly-skilled support staff and dedicated volunteer helpers, know the pupils very well and know how to motivate and support them to achieve successfully.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the outdoor and indoor spaces have developed well since the previous inspection. However, staff do not yet use every opportunity to move children on in their learning. For example, when some children are already confident in the skills being taught, and they could be taken further, this is not done. Staff sometimes lack the flexibility to allow children to follow their interests in order to learn new things and to broaden their experiences. This applies indoors and outside. Despite this, children are happy, well cared for and make adequate progress.
- The teaching of reading is a high priority throughout the school. Much reading takes place in groups or in one-to-one sessions outside the classroom in dedicated reading time. Additional teachers and teaching assistants use skilful questioning techniques to ensure pupils understand what they have read. Small-group work also helps to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics.

- In a mathematics lesson in Key Stage 2, pupils were expertly guided by the teacher's careful questioning and the chance to discuss with their partners how to read word problems very carefully and select the information they needed to calculate the answer. Excellent and sensitive support was given by the teaching assistant to those pupils who asked for extra help. Pupils were encouraged to estimate the answer so they had an idea of whether their calculation resulted in a sensible answer. Pupils were totally captivated from the word 'go'. This set the tone for the rapid learning that followed.
- Occasionally, low-level disturbances, such as chatting when the teacher is talking or swinging on chairs, remain unchecked and the pace of learning can slow. Sometimes, even when pupils are ready to take that next step, there is not enough new learning provided and this affects the rate of progress made. However, pupils remain well-behaved and focused on the task, practising what they already know.
- Teachers give detailed feedback to help pupils to move forward in their learning. This is in two colours: 'tickled pink', which highlights good or excellent features of pupils' work, and 'green for growth', which shows the pupils how to improve their work. Pupils clearly understand this system and know that the green comments help them to increase and improve their skills. This feedback to pupils is used consistently across classes and different subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in lessons. Additional adults teach these pupils separately for some of the time with creative resources that capture their interest and attention. This enables pupils to be fully included in lessons, covering similar topics and concepts as their peers. As a result, they make good progress.
- The most able pupils are provided with greater challenge to make sure that they also make good progress from their starting points.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most St. Mary's pupils have beautiful manners and show great respect for all members of the school community. In lessons, pupils are attentive and work well with each other. At playtimes, they play safely and happily with each other. On occasions when pupils have been out of school, for example, on a residential visit to Robinwood (an outdoor activity centre) or carol singing in Stockport market, their behaviour is praised by people who meet them.
- Pupils attend school regularly and say they enjoy many different activities and clubs for them to attend. Most say that behaviour is good because leaders have ensured that there is an inclusive atmosphere with harmonious relationships among pupils of different backgrounds and beliefs. As a result, there are very few incidences of bullying. Pupils have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying possible.
- Pupils say that they feel safe because there are many adults around. The majority of parents say that their child is safe and enjoys attending school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are aware of the dangers of substances such as drugs, tobacco and alcohol and they know how to live healthily.
- Parents say the school provides their children with many activities for them to get involved. Many describe the school as 'warm, open and inclusive'. Pupils love to be involved in raising funds for those less fortunate than themselves, through charities such as CAFOD and Children in Need.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe while using the internet and a few say that they would like more activities that involve information and communication control technology (ICT).
- The sterling work of the learning mentor supports families in giving them practical advice and helping to contact the appropriate agencies. Vulnerable pupils have their self-esteem boosted, their worries aired and their feeling of safety strengthened. Attendance has improved as a result of the learning mentor's work.
- A minority of parents indicated on Parent View negative opinions about the school's work, however, the inspector found good practice which leads to good outcomes for pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- The skills of the three senior leaders complement each other well and they make a strong, dynamic team with good capacity for further improvement. They are passionate about getting the best for the pupils and their families. They lead teaching very well.
- A new (acting) deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2013 and this has helped to accelerate the rate of progress this school has made since its previous inspection. An effective tracking system is in place, which leaders scrutinise rigorously to identify those pupils needing additional help with their learning. A new marking and feedback policy, consistently used across the school, is helping pupils to move forward in their learning.
- Teachers' performance is checked on thoroughly by leaders and teachers are set targets that are linked to the school's priorities, and especially pupils' achievement.
- Training courses are linked to the priorities of the school. In-house coaching and mentoring is showing positive impact in the quality of teaching and in pupils' work. All teachers are working together well to prepare themselves and their colleagues for the new curriculum in September 2014.
- Even though provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and children make adequate progress, there are still further steps to take in driving learning at a faster pace to obtain the very best outcomes for the youngest children.
- The wide range of topics studied by pupils contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There are many opportunities for pupils to find out about the world around them and the wide range of faiths and cultures. Consequently, pupils are kind to and tolerant of each other.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement is accurate. They have worked well and have been fully supported by the local authority and the Diocese to validate their judgements on teaching and to identify additional support to assist staff in their development. Senior leaders are encouraging subject leaders to broaden their knowledge about the development of their subjects across the school. The wider distribution of management responsibilities is developing middle leaders' ability to contribute well to the school's successes.
- The primary school sports funding is used to employ specialist sport coaches to teach a variety of sports and to purchase additional sports packages from the local authority to broaden pupils' awareness of different sports.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional support, including one-to-one and small-group support for eligible pupils. The funding is also used to subsidise educational visits and activity clubs.
- School also runs a daily breakfast club where parents as well as pupils can purchase a healthy breakfast.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed about the school's progress towards its priorities. The governors know the school very well; some governors help in the daily life of the school, such as helping in class or running a 'mums and toddlers' group. Their heart and soul is in helping this school to provide the very best it can offer.
 - Governors continuously challenge leaders to accelerate pupils' progress. As a result, pupils have made more rapid progress since the last inspection. Through their close analysis of comparative data, governors have an accurate view of the school's performance compared to other schools nationally. The governing body clearly understand their roles and have attended many training courses.
 - Governors are aware of the quality of teaching in the school and know that teachers' salary and targets are linked to pupils' progress. Governors have rigorously evaluated the impact of the support provided through the pupil premium funding. Governors know that the primary school sport funding is spent on providing specialist physical education coaches and are aware of the many clubs and activities that are offered to pupils. Governors ensure that equal

opportunities are promoted and safeguarding requirements are met.

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	106124
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	430995

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	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Brearley
Headteacher	Catherine Cunliffe
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2012
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