

St Mary's RC Primary School Manchester

Clare Road, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 2QW

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- From low starting points, pupils achieve well, and by the time they leave Year 6 they reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good overall. There have been improvements in the way reading, writing and mathematics are taught.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils say that they like school and value their teachers.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are kept safe by adults who care for them.
- Pupils are respectful towards adults and kind and considerate towards each other.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. The outdoor areas have been very well developed and provide an excellent setting to help nurture pupils' imagination and promote learning.
- The headteacher is uncompromising in her drive to continue to improve standards; she is very well supported by school leaders and enjoys the full confidence of pupils, parents, staff and the governing body.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, have maintained pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching through a period of significant turbulence, including changes to the building and to staffing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always learn as well as they should. This is because when pupils select tasks that are too easy for them, it sometimes goes unnoticed. Similarly, pupils do not always respond to the marking comments and again this goes unchecked by staff
- Opportunities for pupils to practise writing and mathematics skills across other subjects are sometimes missed.
- The effect of actions put into place by school leaders are not always checked quickly enough. The excellent practice that exists in the school is not fully adopted in all classes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by teachers and they also observed sessions taken by teaching assistants. The headteacher joined an inspector during one of the observations.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons and at lunchtime. They met formally with two groups of pupils and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders and managers, members of the governing body, two parents and a representative from the local authority.
- A range of documents were considered by inspectors, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings, and records relating to attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also examined work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors took account of 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke informally to a small group of parents at the start of the school day. They also took account of pupil and parent questionnaires recently distributed by the school.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheryl Farnworth

Additional Inspector

Ian Young

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger in size than most primary schools and is continuing to grow.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is very near to the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below that usually found.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is similar to the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is increasing but remains below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- There have been a number of changes to staffing since the previous inspection, including the appointment of the headteacher and two assistant headteachers. Nine members of the teaching staff have left the school and there has been an extensive building programme to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to raise pupils' progress and standards of attainment by making sure that teachers always:
 - create as many opportunities as they can for pupils to practise writing and mathematics skills across the curriculum
 - expect and check that pupils choose activities that challenge them fully and help them to achieve to the very best of their ability
 - check that pupils respond to the advice given through the marking of their work, so that they are able to learn from their mistakes.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management to be outstanding by:
 - checking even more quickly that actions taken are raising standards
 - making sure that the good and exemplary classroom practice which already exists in the school is adopted across the school by all teachers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school in the Nursery class with skills below those typically found. They go on to make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage. When children join Year 1 they are ready for learning in Key Stage 1, though their skills in reading, writing and mathematics remain slightly below those typical for their age.
- In 2013 the standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly average. However, from their starting points the progress made by pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 was similar to national levels. The school's pupil progress information and work seen in pupils' books shows that current Year 6 pupils who have recently taken the national tests have made better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than pupils in previous years.
- School leaders have put a range of strategies in place to help improve pupils' reading skills. For example, staff have had training to enhance their expertise in teaching reading. The proportion of Year 1 pupils expected to reach the required standard in matching letters to the sounds that they make is set to increase this year. What is more, older pupils who spoke and read to inspectors were positive about reading and felt that they had plenty of opportunities to read for different reasons. However, pupils do not always get the same range of opportunities to practise writing and mathematical skills across other subjects, which restricts the progress that they are able to make.
- In the 2014 tests a higher proportion of pupils are expected to reach the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The most able pupils are well provided for; their needs are quickly identified and there are challenging activities available for them in most lessons.
- The school provides very effective support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Carefully planned small group and one-to-one sessions help pupils to learn well and make good progress. The additional needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language are also well catered for, as and when the need arises.
- In Year 6 in 2013, those pupils eligible for free school meals and supported through pupil premium funding attained standards approximately two terms behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Current school data shows that any gaps between eligible pupils and others are quickly reduced. This confirms that the school is fully committed to making sure that all pupils have the same chance to succeed.

The quality of teaching is good

- Overall the quality of teaching is good and there are some examples of excellent teaching across the school. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Most pupils are clear about what they have to do because teachers explain carefully what they expect pupils to achieve. However, there are a few occasions when learning slows because teachers do not check quickly enough that pupils have an activity that will help them learn as much as they can.
- Teachers skilfully question pupils to check their level of understanding. Pupils frequently check their own learning and ask for help when they need it. Pupils are also encouraged to share their ideas and learn from each other.
- There has been a focus on improving the quality of pupils' writing and this is particularly evident in the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1. Work in books shows that pupils started the Year with very limited skills and are now writing interesting stories of up to two pages long. Access to the 'Forest School' area has contributed to improving the quality of writing for pupils across the school because pupils have plenty of space to create settings and engage in role play. This inspires them to write more creatively and knowledgeably, building on their own experiences.
- Teaching and learning in mathematics has improved. Teachers have engaged in training to

improve their mathematics teaching and finely hone their skills in assessing pupils' progress. Consequently, they are more efficient at identifying pupils who need additional support with mathematics. Moreover, they are fully equipped to provide an intervention which will best help to fill any gaps in pupils' learning.

- School leaders have put systems in place to improve the effect of teachers' marking. Teachers' comments help pupils to make their work even better. However, teachers do not always check that pupils complete their corrections and learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide a good level of support for all pupils including those with additional needs and the most able.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In lessons and around school pupils are courteous and considerate. Pupils at St Mary's value their teachers and come to school wanting to learn.
- The school environment is well looked after, classrooms are vibrant and a range of prompts to help pupils with their learning are displayed. Staff and pupils are particularly proud of the outdoor environment. The extensive 'Forest Schools' area, includes the 'Peace Garden' where pupils can enjoy periods of quiet reflection and a 'Secret Garden' in which, amongst other learning activities, pupils can grow plants and vegetables to develop their knowledge of nature and healthy eating.
- Pupils take on a number of responsibilities around the school and are influential in improving their surroundings and helping those less fortunate than themselves. For example, pupils have helped to design the trim trail in the school grounds and to raise money to buy a tree house. They have also organised events such as a cake sale and donated profits to national and international charities of their choice.
- There are some pupils at school who sometimes find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. However, they are very well supported by staff and their behaviour does not stop learning from taking place. However, when teachers do not check that pupils select tasks that challenge them effectively, some pupils can become slightly distracted from their learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils feel safe because they know that adults will keep them safe in school. Pupils know about different forms of bullying and are aware of a range of prejudices. They agree that bullying is rare since new behaviour-management systems and lunch time activities were introduced. School records verify this.
- The primary school sport funding is used to pay for sports coaches and play leaders to help develop the skills of both pupils and staff. Pupils can choose from a range of sporting activities to help them stay healthy and promote well-being. There are also increased opportunities for pupils to become involved in sporting competitions with other local schools.
- Pupils' attendance has increased to above average levels this year, which reflects their greater enjoyment of school. All pupils and parents who spoke to inspectors said that the school has improved since the current headteacher took up her post.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly ambitious and clearly focussed on continuing to improve standards. She is very well supported by the assistant headteachers, staff and governors. School leaders have worked hard to put together a team that wants the very best for pupils and together they have the skills, expertise and determination to make sure that the school continues to improve.
- The school's view of how well it is doing is accurate because it is based on detailed and regular examination of the work that it does. Targets set for teachers are closely linked to the school's planning documents and both are focused on improving standards.

- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching and learning and put actions into place to address identified areas for development. For example, staff are supported by a programme of training and peer coaching to meet their individual needs and school priorities. However, school leaders recognise that the effect of these actions have not always been checked quickly enough.
- Middle leaders are knowledgeable about all aspects of their areas of responsibility and are well supported by senior leaders to develop their skills. They work well with other members of staff to share their expertise and this is set to be extended further.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs soundly and is enriched by a range of after-school activities as well as visits and visitors that are carefully linked to topic themes. For example, a trip to Jodrell Bank fits with the 'space' topic and a visiting author was at the school during the inspection helping to inspire pupils and develop their reading and writing skills.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is well developed. For example, during 'African Week' pupils enjoyed tasting African food, playing African drums and listening to stories told by African people about Africa.
- The local authority provides an appropriate level of support to this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly committed to St Mary's. It has steered the school through a turbulent time and emerged the stronger for it. Governors increasingly ask challenging questions so that they know all about the school, including about the quality of teaching. Governors understand pupils' performance data and attend training to help them fulfil their duties, including meeting safeguarding and budgetary requirements. They know that salary progression must depend on how effective teachers are. The governing body understands how the pupil-premium funding is used and the impact that it is having on eligible pupils.

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	105534
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	444024

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	361
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Devlin
Headteacher	Mylene McGuire
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2010
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