

Great Marsden St John's Church of England Primary School

Trent Road, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 0NX

Inspection dates 28–29 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching quality, while improving, is inconsistent. As a result, not all pupils make routinely good progress in their learning to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Not all teachers follow the school's own policy for marking and feedback. Even though comments to help pupils improve are often helpful, teachers do not routinely check to ensure pupils' responses are correct. On occasions, some errors made by pupils go unchecked.
- Pupils' progress in writing is variable. Opportunities for them to write longer pieces of work in other subjects, thereby demonstrating their wider command of English, are mixed. Pupils' use of spelling, grammar and punctuation is also variable. This is because errors are not always identified, meaning pupils cannot learn from their mistakes.
- As leaders rightly identify, the most able pupils in the school are not always challenged to achieve as well as they can.

The school has the following strengths

- The calm determination of the headteacher, supported ably by her senior leadership team, has brought about good improvements in the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.
- The good capacity to improve is also the result of more effective middle leaders. Subject leaders, for example, have an increasingly strong view of teaching and learning quality in their subjects.
- Members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), like the governing body before them, have held leaders to account well throughout the time the school has been in special measures.
- There has been a transformation in the early years. Quality is now good. Children here are settled, confident individuals, learning and developing well.
- Pupils are making better rates of progress than they did at the time of the previous inspection. Gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are narrowing. These better all-round outcomes are the result of improved teaching quality.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language receive good support and achieve well from their different starting points.
- Also improved is the behaviour of pupils. They display good attitudes to learning, are smart in their appearance and are polite. Their attendance is above average. Good systems are in place to keep pupils safe.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is promoted well. Themes such as 'community' help them to understand British values and put them into practice.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was the fifth monitoring inspection undertaken by HMI since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013. Owing to the improvements observed by inspectors during this and previous visits, this inspection was deemed to be a full inspection.
- The inspection team drew on evidence gathered during the previous monitoring inspections.
- In this inspection, inspectors observed the school at work, including in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation and met with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders. Meetings were also held with a group of pupils, eight parents, three members of the IEB, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the teaching and learning in lessons and sessions taught by teachers and assistants. During these observations, inspectors spoke with pupils and examined work in books completed over time. Two visits to classes were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- There were too few responses recorded by parents on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, for inspectors to take into account. Inspectors did consider the responses of the school's own surveys of parents, staff and pupils, all undertaken in 2014/15.

Inspection team

Mark Williams, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school in England. It is due to become an academy on 1 June 2015, sponsored by the Cidari Trust.
- The early years provision comprises a Reception class which children attend full time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for support through the pupil premium, is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not or believed not to be English is average and rising. An average proportion of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards for 2014, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been a number of changes in staffing, class organisation and governance since the previous inspection. The headteacher has been in post since January 2014, just after the school was judged to require special measures. The Year 6 teacher is currently acting in the role of deputy headteacher. The early years leader is seconded from another school in the local authority. An IEB took over responsibility for the governance of the school in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- As the school moves towards becoming an academy, leaders should build on the improvements they have made to the quality of teaching so that it is routinely good or better and standards attained by pupils rise, particularly in writing, by ensuring:
 - teachers identify where pupils make errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation and provide opportunities for corrections to be made
 - pupils have opportunities to write longer pieces of work in subjects other than English, thereby demonstrating their wider command of the English language
 - the school's own policy for marking and feedback is reviewed so that errors do not go unnoticed and when responses are made teachers check to see they are correct
 - the most able pupils in the school are challenged to achieve as well as they can.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Calm, determined leadership from the headteacher, ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher, the inclusion manager and the early years leader – all strong role models, has brought about key improvements in teaching quality and outcomes for pupils. In Year 2, for example, expectations of what pupils are to do and achieve are now higher than they were in the past. This is resulting in better outcomes for this group of pupils.
- The headteacher has not shirked from making difficult decisions or taking effective action to deal with underperformance. Consequently, performance management arrangements holds staff to account well and makes clear the aims of the school and what needs to be done to improve. The headteacher is held in high regard by staff, pupils and parents. Parents who spoke with inspectors appreciate her visibility.
- With support from the local authority, the senior leaders have developed well the skills of subject leaders. These leaders know the strengths and areas to develop in their own areas well. As a result, leaders across the school have a clear overview of how successfully the school is performing. The leader for physical education (PE), for example, has judged correctly that the additional PE and sport funding has led to teachers planning better and teaching lessons that enable pupils to build on previous learning to master new skills.
- Also used to good effect is the pupil premium funding. This is seen in the closing of the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, demonstrating well that leaders have equality of opportunity at their heart.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and, apart from a general underuse of opportunities to write longer pieces of work, links subjects together well. Coverage of themes such as 'community' and 'voting', and the consideration of questions about why people were drawn to the town of Nelson, helps pupils understand and appreciate diversity. They also help pupils tackle discrimination and see the importance of establishing good relations with different members of the community. Pupils are therefore prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority has a keen understanding of the school. Officers, over time, have brokered a range of leadership support, including the secondment of key staff, such as the early years leader for example. The local authority's consultants have focused successfully on working with the headteacher to improve teaching and learning quality. Quite correctly, this support has been tapered over time as leaders have been able to stand firmly on their own feet.
- The diocese, working with the acting deputy headteacher, has provided helpful support to enable pupils in Year 6 increasingly to demonstrate the characteristics found in successful learners.
- A small number of parents do not believe communications with the school are strong enough. Inspectors, over time, have seen a different picture. A range of methods to communicate are in use, including group calls and regular newsletters to keep parents abreast of what is going on. Furthermore, the school's website has been updated by the leaders responsible for computing so it can be translated into other languages, Polish and Urdu for example.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements well.
- Overall, leaders are demonstrating good capacity to improve the school further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - After the school was placed into special measures in November 2013, the then governing body began to hold leaders to account for the performance of the school increasingly well. The IEB, appointed in September 2014, has continued in this vein.
 - The IEB, because the self-evaluation of leaders is accurate, has a sharp understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop. It has a strong grasp of teaching quality and performance management meaning it supports the headteacher well in rewarding good teaching and tackling underperformance. It also has a good overview of how pupils are kept safe and of data showing how well pupils are achieving. IEB members receive good levels of detail from leaders, including through helpful, informative reports provided by the headteacher.
 - The IEB's small size means decisions are arrived at quickly. The expertise held by its membership, including serving headteachers of successful schools, brings strong levels of insight, support and challenge to the headteacher and her leaders. They hold leaders, including subject leaders, to account well.
 - The Chair of the IEB is providing effective support to school leaders in the transition towards academy status. It is planned that the IEB's role will come to an end at the end of the summer term 2015. The Chair is liaising with the headteacher, diocese and the sponsor designate to decide upon a suitable

model of governance from September 2015 that builds on existing strengths. One key feature at the heart of all thinking is how parents will be represented in the new arrangements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Around school, pupils are polite and are smart in their appearance. They move around in an orderly fashion, to and from assembly for example. This means such activities start promptly and lessons begin without fuss.
- In lessons, on the whole, pupils are attentive to their teachers and are keen to learn. They take increasing pride in their work. Any disruption that occurs is minimal – a good improvement from the previous inspection. A quick word from an adult is usually all that is needed if a pupil does not behave in line with the school's high expectations.
- Pupils behave well outside and use with respect the improved equipment gained by the work of the school council. Good levels of supervision from adults, and equally good contributions from pupils acting as lunchtime leaders, contribute strongly to the positive atmosphere.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Themes such as 'community' help them to understand British values and put them into practice. Pupils in Year 3, for example, have thought about rights and responsibilities through the Magna Carta and votes for women. In assemblies, pupils take with enthusiasm opportunities to talk together about themes such as 'why actions speak louder than words' and 'human rights', linking them well to current affairs such as the recent earthquake in Nepal.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. If accidents or incidents occur in school they, plus contact with parents, are recorded.
- Parents responding to the school's own questionnaire in December 2014, along with those parents spoken to during the course of this inspection, were all of the view their children were safe and well-cared for. The school's own survey of pupils, coupled with inspectors' discussions, confirms pupils are equally positive.
- Attendance is above average and incidences of lateness have been reduced. The awarding of 'fivers' to the class with the best attendance each week is greeted with much enthusiasm and anticipation.
- Liaison with external agencies, led by the leader of inclusion, is good. As a result, strong levels of support are offered not only to vulnerable pupils but also, as appropriate, to families. The result of such support is that, for example, pupils at risk of exclusion have that risk reduced significantly.
- Pupils spoken with knew about the importance of e-safety. They were also aware of the different types of bullying that exist and how to deal with them. They said that, on occasions, name calling does exist and that sometimes this is of a racist or homophobic nature. They were most adamant though such words were wrong and that adults always took action against the few pupils who use such language to prevent it from happening again.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- While improving, with more that is frequently good, teaching quality is inconsistent. As a result, while some pupils make good progress in their learning, sometimes from below average starting points, not all do so. This means not all pupils reach the standards of which they are capable.
- There are three key reasons why teaching is inconsistent. First, teachers do not always identify where pupils make errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation or provide opportunities for corrections to be made. Second, the school's own policy for marking and feedback is not adhered to so that errors sometimes go unnoticed. Furthermore, when pupils do respond to often helpful comments, such responses are not routinely checked to see they are correct. Such features, where they occur, mean pupils cannot learn from their mistakes. Third, and as identified by leaders, while expectations of teachers have risen, the most able pupils in the school are not always challenged to achieve as well as they can.
- Over time, teaching quality in mathematics has been particularly variable. Because teachers now sequence learning better so that pupils build on previous knowledge and skills, the variation in teaching quality has

been reduced.

- Better quality teaching is also improving pupils' skills in reading and, for younger pupils, their use of phonics (letters and the sounds they make).
- Where teaching is best, pupils make good progress in their learning. Where teaching is routinely good, in Year 6 for example, the following features are evident over time: clarity about what pupils are to learn; good subject knowledge of adults, including teaching assistants and the use of correct vocabulary, in mathematics for example. Further features include: questioning that draws out from pupils how well they understand what is being taught; activities that meet the needs of different abilities and marking and feedback that spot misconceptions when they arise and help pupils identify where and what they need to improve. Year 6 pupils, for example, even allowing for a considerable legacy of underachievement, are as a result of such routinely good teaching, making strides in their work in English and mathematics.
- Support for disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs and for those for whom English is an additional language is good. A swift identification of needs and appropriate programmes of support enable these groups of pupils to achieve well.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards attained by pupils in Year 6 between 2012 and 2014, as seen in published data, have been low in reading, writing and mathematics. Equally low in the past have been the levels of pupil progress. This is because, over time, there has been considerable underachievement owing to weak teaching. The picture for current pupils, though, is much more positive: teaching quality has improved and, as a result, rates of pupils' progress are no longer inadequate. Even where the legacy of underachievement is still most keenly felt, in Year 6 for example, pupils are making greater strides in their learning. Even though not on track to reach floor standards, the progress they have made in their learning since September 2014 has been good.
- Over the three years encompassing 2012 to 2014, disadvantaged pupils have attained less well than their peers. However, under the good leadership that is now in place, the gap has narrowed and, in some cases, disadvantaged pupils are attaining better than their peers in school. For example, in 2014 in reading, disadvantaged pupils, as a result of the targeted support in place, outperformed their peers in school so they were approximately one term ahead. However, when compared to other pupils nationally, they were approximately one year behind. Nonetheless, this represents a significant improvement on attainment in 2013.
- In both writing and mathematics in 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was similar to their peers in school. When compared with other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were about a year-and-a-half behind in writing and approximately one year behind in mathematics. As with reading, these figures represent a significant improvement on those for 2013. The school's own information (data and other evidence such as work in pupils' books), verified by inspectors over time, confirms gaps are continuing to close.
- The achievement of pupils across the school continues to improve. Pupils are reading with increased fluency, expression and understanding. Younger pupils are using skills in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) increasingly well. In their writing, pupils throughout the school capture the imagination of readers well by using interesting words. Year 3 pupils, for example, articulated clearly and enthusiastically why Stig of the Dump would take different objects into his den.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs achieve well because of the good support they receive.
- The school's curriculum contributes to the improvement in achievement well, not least because it captures the imagination of pupils. In Year 1, younger pupils were able, because of the teacher's clear demonstrations and instructions, to throw bean bags in straight lines to given targets. Furthermore, the knowledge and understanding of pupils of different places across the world is developing well. For example, Year 4 pupils identified well different features of cities in Sweden using oblique aerial photographs. Across the school, pupils present information in a variety of ways in different subjects, tables, bar charts and spread sheets for example. Less evident, though, are opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces of work in subjects other than English, thereby demonstrating their wider command of the English language.
- The most able pupils reach standards in line with their peers. However, because they sometimes do the same work as other pupils, they are not always challenged to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.

The early years provision**is good**

- The early years has been transformed. Good, strong leadership has ensured purposeful learning is the norm both indoors and outside the classroom in safe, secure areas. Teaching assistants are now used well, to help children play or break down words into letter sounds for example. Consequently, children in the Reception class are settled, confident individuals making, strides in their learning and development. They behave very well.
- Children in this class now benefit from routinely good teaching that helps them develop well the skills they need to go into Year 1. They make good progress from mixed starting points, some of which are below average. This consistency in teaching quality is why the overall effectiveness of the provision is judged to be higher than the rest of the school.
- This good quality teaching also develops well children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The children, for example, know that fresh water to drink is not available to everyone. Thinking about the charity 'Water Aid', photographs on display show children thoughtfully constructing a system of pipes to transfer water into containers.
- The checking of children's progress is thorough. Records and their learning journals show that next steps are sharply focused on the most important things children need to do next. They also record well where successes have been made. Leaders agree that there is scope to record parental contributions more regularly within these journals. Overall, though, leaders have involved parents increasingly well in the life of the provision, through 'stay and play' activities for example. Likewise, liaison with other early years providers enables leaders to gain helpful information about what children can and cannot do.

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	119436
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	456488

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Daphne Durham
Headteacher	Michaela Underwood
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2013
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