

# St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Balderstone

Oldham Road, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL11 2HB

**Inspection dates** 28–29 April 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement.

- Changes in leadership have slowed the pace of development at the school.
- Successive school leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently good. As a result, pupils, including those who have special educational needs and the most able, have not achieved well. The school is not improving quickly enough.
- Middle leaders are not yet having a positive impact upon raising standards at the school.
- Targets set for teachers and those set in the school development plan are not closely linked to pupils' progress. They are not measurable enough for leaders to assess how well the school is doing.
- Governors do not have all of the skills that they need to help them check effectively on the school's work or challenge senior leaders. They have not ensured that all risk assessments are carried out rigorously.
- The quality of teaching and learning is uneven across the school. The teaching of reading is weak after pupils have mastered early skills, and so their reading does not improve quickly enough.
- Pupils do not always have enough opportunities to practise basic writing and mathematical skills in other contexts.
- Teachers do not always provide activities that challenge all pupils at an appropriate level. Consequently, some pupils become distracted from their learning and their behaviour slips.
- Assessment information for the children in the early years has been unreliable. Too few children leave the Reception class well prepared for the work that they will meet in Year 1.

### The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher and the recently appointed deputy headteacher are working effectively to improve standards at the school.
- Governors are keen to develop their skills so that they can challenge school leaders more effectively.
- Pupils understand the new behaviour management system and feel that it helps them to manage their own behaviour, and so behaviour is improving.
- Pupils like their teachers and enjoy learning. They say that they feel safe in school. Pupils are kept safe by adults who care for them well.
- Attendance is above national levels and improving.
- Gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are narrowing.
- The quality of teaching is good in some classes.
- The quality of learning and teaching in the early years is improving since the seconded teacher took up post.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes taught by teachers and in activities taken by teaching assistants. Two learning walks around the school also took place.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils, and observed and spoke to pupils during lessons, playtime and at lunchtime. They also listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders and managers, members of the governing body, two representatives from the local authority and the newly appointed substantive headteacher.
- A range of documents were considered by inspectors, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, the school development plans, 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 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and of a summary of the responses to a parental questionnaire recently distributed by the school.
- Inspectors also considered responses from 23 staff to the inspection questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frances Farnworth

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is smaller than most primary schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. There are no pupils at the very early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The school provides full-time places for children in the Reception classes.
- The school is currently led by an executive headteacher who shares her time between St Mary's and Middleton Parish Church School. The newly appointed substantive (permanent) headteacher will take up his post in June. The substantive deputy headteacher is recently appointed.
- There have been three headteachers at the school in the past two years and four deputy headteachers in the last year. Two teachers joined the school in September 2014.
- The early years teacher is on secondment from Middleton Parish Church School.
- A breakfast club is provided for pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so that pupils behave well and make at least good progress by making sure that teachers always:
  - use assessment information effectively to identify gaps in pupils' learning
  - plan activities which build on what pupils already know and can do, particularly for the most-able pupils and those who have special educational needs
  - provide more opportunities for pupils to practise basic mathematical skills in real-life situations and problem-solving tasks
  - make sure that pupils have the opportunity to practise spelling, grammar and punctuation skills that they have learned when they write at length
  - identify what pupils are expected to learn during reading lessons and check that these skills have been developed.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management, including governance, by making sure that:
  - targets set in the school development plan and those set for teachers are measurable and linked to pupils' progress
  - middle leaders are able to contribute fully to raising standards in their area of responsibility
  - governors develop their expertise in monitoring the work of the school, become more proactive in checking on the impact of actions and in challenging school leaders, and ensure that all safety requirements are met.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching have suffered because of the many changes in leadership in recent years. However, the executive headteacher is well supported by the recently appointed substantive deputy headteacher. Together they have quickly and successfully gained the confidence of a staff team. The school is now improving steadily after a period of decline following the previous inspection. However, the rate of improvement has not been rapid enough to raise the quality of teaching or pupils' achievement to consistently good.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching and learning thoroughly, and training is provided to support staff development. However, middle leaders are not yet fully involved in taking actions to improve standards in their areas of responsibility. For example, the provision available for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is not closely monitored. Interventions are not effective enough to ensure that these pupils make the best progress that they can.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. They are working closely with the newly appointed headteacher who is not yet in post. This is to ensure a seamless transition and guarantee that any actions put into place that successfully improve standards will continue when the new school leader takes over.
- Targets set in the school improvement plan and those set for teachers are not measurable enough or linked closely to the progress pupils are expected to make. As a result, targets do not help school leaders to quickly evaluate the effectiveness of their actions.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well addressed at the school. Good relations are fostered and behaviour is improving. The new headteacher has plans to improve the curriculum. However, at the moment it does not successfully help pupils to achieve consistently well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's systems for making sure that there is no discrimination and all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed are not yet fully in place. This is because some of the most-able pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are not fully supported to achieve quite as well as other pupils. However, support through the pupil premium is appropriately directed towards meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding has been used well to increase pupils' participation in sporting activities and encourage healthy lifestyles. A range of after-school sporting activities is available to pupils and they now participate in more inter-school sporting competitions. A new multi-use games area has been developed which pupils are able to use during lunchtimes and after school.
- The local authority has been able to become more involved with the school since the executive headteacher took up her post. It is now providing a good level of support to help improve the quality of governance, teaching, learning and behaviour management.
- School leaders, including governors, are improving measures to make sure that staff and pupils are kept safe. Statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding, are appropriately met.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance requires improvement. Aspects of governance have improved since the previous inspection. For example, governors now question the contents of reports received from school leaders. However, governors remain too dependent on such reports to help them to find out about the quality of teaching and learning at the school.
  - Governors know that standards are not improving quickly enough. However, they do not effectively challenge the school leadership about the impact of actions taken. They are keen to develop their skills in analysing national performance data to help increase the level of challenge they are able to provide.
  - Members of the governing body are fully involved in setting targets for the headteacher and know about the arrangements for checking on teachers' performance. They now understand that rewards for good teaching must be linked to pupils' progress and that any underperformance must be tackled quickly.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### requires improvement

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Though most pupils say that they enjoy learning and find their teachers very helpful, in some lessons a few pupils lose interest in what they are learning. This is because the work is too easy or too difficult for

them, and can lead to distracted behaviour which slows their progress.

- Pupils play well together and look after each other in the playground. For example, delegated pupils wear green bands so that younger pupils can see who to go to if they need any help. In class and around school pupils have good manners, saying 'please' and 'thank you' to adults and other pupils.
- The pupils on the school council make sure that they listen to what other pupils have to say and pass on the message to adults in the school. They feel proud of their involvement in planning activities to raise money, such as World Book Day when pupils paid money to dress up and donated the proceeds to charity.
- Pupils feel that behaviour has improved since the executive headteacher took up her post. They fully understand the new behaviour chart system. Pupils know that it is 'good to be green' and they do not want to go to red because they know that they will miss the Friday afternoon treat. School records show that this system is effective; the numbers of pupils missing 'golden time' on Friday has reduced by more than half.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.
- The school has systems in place to make sure that pupils know about how to stay safe when using technologies. Pupils say that they feel safe in school because adults care for them well. However, governors have not done enough to ensure that their assessments of risk to pupils are as good as they could be.
- Pupils have a clear view of what bullying means, and know the difference between bullying and falling out. They feel that bullying is now rare in school because together they are 'like one big, welcoming family'.
- Almost half of the small proportion of parents who responded to the online questionnaire felt that bullying could be managed more effectively. School records show that any bullying reported to staff is effectively dealt with.
- Following a dip in 2013, attendance has returned to above average and continues to improve.

### The quality of teaching

#### requires improvement

- Although there is some good teaching evident, overall the quality of teaching requires improvement. This is because it is not yet consistently good enough over time to ensure good achievement. Teachers do not always use assessment information to identify gaps in pupils' learning and then plan activities at the correct level of challenge for all pupils. This is particularly the case for the most-able pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs.
- The teaching of reading has several strengths. For example, phonics (the sounds letters make) is taught consistently well which helps to promote basic reading skills. However, when pupils are ready to develop their higher level reading skills, teachers do not always identify which skills they are expected to learn. Neither do they set follow-up tasks for pupils, so that they can check how effectively these more advanced reading skills are being acquired.
- Basic writing skills are now being taught regularly and pupils' understanding of how to use these skills is improving. However, pupils do not consistently use these basic skills when they are writing at length. For example, work in Year 5 books showed that pupils could use speech marks well. However, there was no opportunity made available to use these skills in pieces of extended writing. As a result, the quality of pupils' writing is not developing quickly enough.
- Similarly, pupils are being taught to develop their basic mathematical skills well. However, they lack confidence in applying this knowledge to their learning because there are too few opportunities to reason and solve problems in a range of contexts. This means that sometimes progress is not as rapid as it could be in mathematics.
- School leaders have very recently introduced new strategies to improve the quality of teachers' marking and its impact on pupils' learning. This is being applied well in most classes and pupils respond well to the advice given by teachers. As a result, pupils are helped to improve their work.
- Across the school, positive relationships exist between pupils and adults. Teachers and teaching assistants effectively question pupils to assess their level of understanding. Teachers also make sure that pupils are given opportunities to share their ideas and learn from each other.

### The achievement of pupils

#### requires improvement

- From their individual starting points, the progress made by pupils has not been consistently good enough in reading, writing and mathematics. Therefore, achievement requires improvement.

- Since 2012, test results show that attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has improved and usually varies around the low side of broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's own assessment data and other inspection evidence confirm that pupils' achievement has improved in most classes since January. However, it remains uneven between classes and, owing to previously inconsistent progress across the school, there is a history of underachievement that still needs to be addressed.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics check was above average. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have a good knowledge of different authors and use this information to help them choose new books. One pupil who read with an inspector said, 'I like to imagine myself in the story because it is more exciting than real life.'
- The achievement of the most-able pupils requires improvement. An increased proportion of pupils are on target to reach the higher Level 3 at Key Stage 1 and Levels 5 and 6 at Key Stage 2 this year. However, there are few additional activities provided for the most-able pupils outside the classroom. Moreover, tasks provided during lessons do not always challenge the most-able pupils well enough.
- The needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are not always addressed well enough. The progress that these pupils make requires improvement because it is below other pupils in school and similar pupils nationally. When the least-able pupils are working in the whole-class situation, the work is sometimes too hard for them and they do not learn well enough.
- In 2014, the attainment in reading of disadvantaged pupils was four terms behind their classmates and almost two years behind other pupils nationally. Attainment in mathematics and writing was approximately one year behind other pupils nationally and other Year 6 pupils in school. Disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as well as other pupils nationally at the end of 2014. However, current data show that the progress of disadvantaged pupils in school is very similar to that of others in their class. This indicates that gaps in achievement are successfully narrowing.

### The early years provision

### requires improvement

- The current school leadership has identified significant discrepancies in the assessment data produced in the early years. Information for children joining the school has been unreliable and overgenerous for those leaving the Reception class. As a result, it is difficult to determine accurately how much progress children have been making across the early years. A seconded teacher has recently put new assessment systems into place to make sure that assessment is now rigorous.
- Since the new executive headteacher joined the school and the seconded teacher has taken responsibility for the early years, the quality of teaching and children's achievement is now improving rapidly. However, the proportion of children who are expected to reach a good level of development this year is set to be below national levels. This is because reading, writing and number skills have not been developed well enough. Although school leaders are now tackling this, children have not been sufficiently well prepared for the work that they are expected to do in Year 1, and thus the early years requires improvement overall.
- The indoor classroom is now developing well and opportunities are provided for children to access all areas of learning. There is no outdoor area available for Reception children to access other than the school playground. However, there are plans now in place to develop an outdoor learning area for sole use of the early years children.
- The Reception class now provides a calm harmonious setting in which children learn to behave well and to develop a positive approach toward their learning. The care shown to the children by the adults working with them is good. The safeguarding arrangements linked to the early years help to make sure that the children are safe and well looked after.
- The early years team has lacked effective management. However, school leaders have drawn up and implemented plans to address shortcomings in leadership, management, teaching, assessment and achievement. These actions have made a positive difference in a short time.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105804
<b>Local authority</b>	Rochdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	462311

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Patricia Sullivan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jacqui Potts
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 May 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 648125
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