

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Balderstone

Oldham Road, Rochdale, Lancashire OL11 2HB

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders provide highly aspirational leadership. They have transformed the school and halted the decline in standards. They have ensured that the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils are now good.
- St Mary's is a school with a calm, caring and purposeful character. Staff morale is high. Christian values permeate the ethos and pupils enjoy learning.
- Leaders promote British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well, through a thoughtful and a wide-ranging curriculum, which enables pupils to thrive.
- The governing body is highly effective. Governors challenge senior leaders rigorously and have been a key part of the school's rapid improvement. Governors know their school very well and are successful in ensuring good teaching and good outcomes for all pupils.
- Pupils love coming to school and are proud to wear their school uniform. Pupils' attitudes to their work are outstanding. Pupils are confident and resilient learners and their behaviour is exemplary.
- Leadership and management of the early years provision is good. Since the last inspection, leaders have transformed the early years and children's progress is accelerating. Pupils' reading skills are not developed as well as they could be. However, senior leaders have identified this.
- Parents and carers are highly positive about the school, especially the work of the leaders. They say that their children are kept safe and are very happy.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school are rising quickly. However, some of the most able pupils could make more rapid progress.
- Teaching is good across subjects. Teachers have effective partnerships with teaching assistants. Pupils are engaged and are well supported in their learning. Teachers' assessments of how well their pupils are achieving are rigorous and timely. This has had a significant impact on the progress of current pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of children's reading in the early years by:
 - ensuring that children read at the right level for their reading ability
 - sharpening teaching assistants' ability to probe children's understanding of what they read.
- Raise the attainment of the most able pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, by:
 - ensuring that their learning activities are more engaging and challenging.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The widely respected headteacher has created a culture and ethos which enable staff and pupils to thrive. He has kept a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils, while also ensuring that pupils have a broad and rich curriculum. His relentless pursuit of excellence has meant that the quality of education at the school has improved rapidly. Pupils' outcomes are now good and continue to improve.
- The headteacher and governors have a clear and accurate view of the school, which takes into account the views of pupils, parents and staff. They frequently check and systematically monitor the work of the school, identify areas for improvement and implement highly effective actions to secure continual improvements. They challenge and change things when they are not having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders, staff and pupils embody the school's vision and values in everything they do. They treat everyone with respect and kindness. Staff, parents and pupils are highly appreciative of the 'family feel' in school.
- The headteacher is committed to offering the best opportunities for staff and pupils and actively seeks partnerships with other schools. Staff are encouraged to visit other schools to share best practice and to monitor pupils' work with other teachers. Staff benefit from highly relevant training, based on their performance management targets and whole-school priorities for improvement. They have received training, for example on the introduction of the new individualised assessment system for all pupils. Staff are highly reflective; they discuss teaching and pupils' outcomes and this leads to good teaching and learning and accurate assessment across the school.
- Leaders make good use of the additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders also make sure that staff are well deployed and effective in supporting this group of pupils. As a result, this group of pupils attend and achieve well.
- Leaders use the additional government funding for primary school sport effectively. Teachers receive training to support their skills. Pupils take part in a wide range of sports, both in school and competitively.
- Leaders make good use of the pupil premium funding to meet the individual needs of eligible pupils. Leaders track and monitor the achievement of these pupils carefully to make sure that the funding has a positive impact on their progress across the curriculum. This has ensured that progress for these pupils has improved and is similar to the progress made by other pupils nationally.
- School leaders have skilfully planned an interesting and balanced curriculum which inspires pupils to learn. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced in subjects across the curriculum. Exciting trips and work ignite pupils' imaginations.
- Leaders provide pupils with excellent opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral social and cultural understanding. Pupils learn about different faiths and beliefs and they understand that this helps them to appreciate the views of others. The school organises visits for pupils as part of the religious education curriculum to learn about

different religions. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular sporting, academic and artistic clubs, as well as residential trips to learn team-building skills.

- Leaders do their utmost to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils take part in voting exercises and discuss events which have happened in the world. Teachers used the recent elections as a vehicle to promote democracy across the school.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school. Every parent who responded to the online survey, Parent View, or who spoke with the inspector, would recommend the school to other parents. Parents commented on how happy their children are, what good progress their children make and how impressed they are with the teachers and the headteacher. One parent echoed the comments of many, and described how the school 'has gone from strength to strength. Any changes are made with the children at the heart of any decision.'
- Leaders involve parents in their child's education and parents praise the school's communication with them. As well as regular parents' evenings, reports home and newsletters, parents are also invited into the school for workshops to learn how to support their child's learning at home. One parent stated that the school 'takes time to talk to me and update me on his progress and have supported me when I have had questions.'
- The local authority has provided effective support to the school. It has helped the school to make rapid progress and accurate judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Governance of the school

- The governing body demonstrates a passion to make the school the best that it can be. They have played a key role in the rapid improvements that have taken place since the last inspection. They have supported leaders effectively and increased the rigour of their support and challenge to school leaders.
- Governors know the school very well and have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness. The governing body robustly uses the knowledge gathered from regular visits to the school and reports from leaders and external advisors to hold school leaders to account for the quality of education provided.
- Governors bring a wide range of skills and expertise to support the headteacher. They are very ambitious for the school and systematically check their own training to ensure that they continue to fulfil their roles as effectively as possible and to continually improve the school.
- The governing body has a clear understanding of how government funding for disadvantaged pupils is used. They use this information to ensure that pupils are progressing as well as they can. Very effective use is made of extra funding for physical education and sport, and governors track its impact on pupils' progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Leaders and governors ensure that staff have relevant and up-to-date training. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. Records, including the single central record, are well maintained, monitored and updated. Leaders undertake the appropriate checks before a new member of staff starts working at the school. When it is necessary, the school liaises closely with external agencies and parents to make sure that pupils are safe. Governors carry out the necessary checks to assure themselves that school leaders are meeting statutory requirements. Parents are confident that their child is safe at school and pupils state that they are 'part of a family' and that 'they feel very safe at school'.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. Teachers and leaders spoke of the positive learning culture which is now evident across the school. Teachers are encouraged to undertake a wide variety of training, and there are increasing opportunities to share good practice within the school and with other schools.
- Pupils are encouraged to discuss their learning in lessons. Teachers display good subject knowledge, and this enables teachers to effectively question, probe and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders have developed an effective assessment system to help guide teachers to plan work for pupils. Teachers use these assessments effectively to make sure that most pupils have work which will develop their skills and understanding. Leaders routinely use information to target pupils and provide support. However, at times some teachers do not provide the most able pupils with work that is challenging enough.
- In most year groups, teachers promote skills in mathematics systematically, providing pupils with opportunities to develop their mental and written skills. Most pupils' work is matched to their needs and develops reasoning, thinking and problem-solving skills well.
- Pupils write well and at length for a wide variety of purposes, especially in key stage 2. Teachers encourage pupils to use ambitious vocabulary to make their writing interesting and support them to deepen their understanding, knowledge and skills. This deepens pupils' understanding, knowledge and skills.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They read regularly at home and with staff in school. Teachers promote reading well throughout the school, for example they use the school's library and regularly visit the local library with pupils. Pupils now have a good grasp of phonic skills and this is having a positive impact on reading progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders and staff have created a very happy, purposeful environment, which helps pupils to become highly confident learners. The highly-effective relationships which

staff have established with pupils, ensures that pupils have high self-esteem and are resilient learners. As a result, attitudes to learning are outstanding across the school and this has a strong impact pupils' progress.

- Pupils feel and are safe in school. They say that bullying never happens, but if it did they are confident that their teachers would help them.
- Pupils learn about keeping themselves safe in wide range of different situations and settings. They all know very well how to keep safe online and how to be healthy. For example, there are highly effective e-safety posters designed by pupils which highlight potential dangers when online. The school ensures that all pupils brush their teeth every day and participate in the school's 'walk a mile'.
- Pupils are very keen to take on roles and responsibilities in the school. This is demonstrated by, for example, older pupils reading with younger pupils, extending their ability and enjoyment of reading. Pupils with responsibilities at the school hold the role with pride and contribute greatly to the school's mission statement of 'growing together within God's family'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding, both in classes and around school. Pupils are courteous, polite and mix together extremely well. They display a care and concern for each other.
- Pupils listen attentively and follow instructions impeccably. They are ready and eager to learn in class. Pupils are highly respectful to each other and support each other effectively during activities.
- At playtime, pupils make excellent use of the well-supervised school grounds and play happily together. The use of sports funding has enabled leaders to train staff and improve the outdoor facilities. This, combined with the use of the 'befrienders', has dramatically reduced the incidents which once occurred.
- Attendance is broadly average, mainly due to parents taking pupils on holiday during term time. However, leaders have ambitious targets and plans for attendance to ensure that it improves. Persistent absence is not an issue at the school. Leaders are quick to follow up on the attendance of any pupil, if it begins to fall. Pupils value their education and understand the importance of coming to school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress from their starting points in a wide range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- In key stage 1, teachers build carefully on the knowledge, understanding and skills that children gain in the early years. The school's assessments and the work observed in pupils' books show that most pupils are working at the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils continue to make progress in key stage 2, and progress is particularly strong in Years 5 and 6. Due to a legacy of weaker teaching, pupils in these year groups are still

catching up. Leaders have identified this and have acted swiftly with staff changes and extra adult support.

- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the national phonics screening check in Year 1 has improved from a two-year decline. Pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, are now making good progress in the phonics screening check. When listening to pupils read, inspectors found that decoding and word recognition are strengths in their reading.
- Progress of the most able pupils could be more rapid. Inspectors' scrutiny of assessment information and of pupils' books showed that the work set for these pupils varies in the level of challenge. Teachers do not always give most-able pupils and most-able disadvantaged pupils opportunities to apply their learning and to work at greater depth.
- Most disadvantaged pupils make good progress. This is helping disadvantaged pupils to catch up with other pupils nationally. At the beginning of September, leaders' strategy for disadvantaged pupils changed. There is greater scrutiny of pupils' outcomes and leaders take swifter actions. As a result, outcomes for this group are improving.
- Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. There are carefully constructed small teaching groups following initial assessments of pupils' needs. There is also a designated member of staff who is trained in speech and language development and she is having a positive impact in this area of need. As a result of effective support, this group of pupils make good progress.

Early years provision

Good

- All staff are vigilant with regard to safeguarding. They ensure that the same rigorous procedures in operation in key stages 1 and 2 are fully implemented in the early years.
- Leadership and management of the early years provision are good. The early years teacher has a detailed knowledge of what the children can do and where they need support. She is using this information extremely well to make amendments to the curriculum and teaching where necessary. The rich and varied curriculum engages children's imaginations and curiosity. Children have fun when they are learning and make good progress as a result. For example, the inspector saw children totally absorbed in the pretence that they were making meals and writing recipes in the 'mud kitchen' outside. The early years teacher works effectively with other adults to ensure that all children's interests are cultivated and their next steps in learning are developed 'in the moment' through their play.
- Partnerships with parents are highly effective. Staff have developed excellent relationships with parents. Parents read with their children every Thursday in class and staff use this as an opportunity to support parents in helping their child to read. Staff encourage parents to discuss their children's learning and development. This contributes to staff being able to create an accurate picture of children's skills and abilities in the different areas of learning.
- Partnerships with other providers are highly effective. Staff have close working relationships with local nurseries. As a result, children's transition is smooth and they

settle swiftly into school. Thorough systems are in place to help transition further. These include home visits, transition days and meetings with parents and carers.

- Teachers and teaching assistants have strong and caring relationships with children. They are trained well and have a comprehensive knowledge of how children learn. Staff make detailed observations of what children can do and their attitudes to learning. They use this information effectively to plan and prepare activities which meet the needs of children.
- The school's own assessments of children when they join the school indicate that their skills and abilities are below those typically expected for their age. The school's assessments are accurate. The majority of children make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for moving to Year 1. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development matches the national average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. This was evident during a reading session, where children in different ability groups were tackling unfamiliar words, using their phonic skills and reading sentences independently. They were keen to talk about the story and what was happening. Children used their phonics knowledge to read unknown words confidently and told inspectors that they 'love reading'.
- Children's progress, particularly the less able in reading, is good, but not as strong as in other aspects of their learning. This is because some adults do not ask questions or provide children with precise next steps in reading and this hinders some children's progress.
- Teachers take every possible opportunity to develop children's key skills of writing and mathematics, both indoors and outdoors. Teachers and teaching assistants ask questions which help children to speak in sentences.
- Mathematics is promoted through activities which engage and excite children, for example in the role-play area children were taking shoes off and walking in the sand, measuring and recording how long their feet were in centimetres.
- Children are cooperative, curious and very welcoming. They have developed effective relationships with each other and enjoy playing and learning together. Staff focus on developing children's confidence and self-esteem, as well as their speaking and listening skills. Children play sensibly and safely at all times, including when playing outdoors. They listen carefully and follow instructions well.
- Any additional funding that the early years receives for disadvantaged children is well spent and these children are making good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	105804
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10032178

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patricia Sullivan
Headteacher	Garry Johnson
Telephone number	017066 48125
Website	www.stmarysce.rochdale.sch.uk
Email address	office@stmarysce.rochdale.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 April 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- There have been a number of changes to staffing since the last inspection. The headteacher took up the post in May 2015, undertook a staffing restructure and appointed an assistant headteacher and four other teachers.
- This is a slightly smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.

- The school works within a cluster of other local schools to provide training opportunities to staff.
- The school did meet government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons, covering all classes in the school. The headteacher accompanied one of the inspectors on one observation as part of the inspection.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke to members of the local governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met a representative from the local authority and the school improvement officer.
- An inspector talked to a group of pupils on the second day of the inspection, and the inspection team talked to pupils in lessons and at break about their learning.
- Inspectors talked to parents as they dropped their children off at school. Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, lunchtimes and playtimes.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their reading. Inspectors examined the quality of work in a wide range of books. They discussed pupils' work and their learning with them in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, curriculum plans and information relating to pupil achievement and safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered 21 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors considered 93 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Julie Kynaston, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Woodhouse

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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