

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Lime Road, Haslingden, Rossendale, Lancashire, BB4 5NP

Inspection dates 9–10 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Achievement is excellent. Attainment when pupils leave school has been well above average for several years.
- Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children enjoy their days in school although opportunities to learn outdoors are not as rich as those indoors.
- The overall quality of teaching is outstanding. It is strongest in Key Stage 2 where lessons inspire pupils because teachers have very high expectations. Many lessons go at a swift and challenging pace, although this is not the case on rare occasions.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are naturally friendly and welcoming to one another and visitors. Their response in lessons is always first class and they strive hard to produce their best work. Attendance is above average.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe; they know how to avoid danger and look after themselves. They are great ambassadors for the school and are justifiably proud of their contribution towards helping others.
- The triumphs of the school are founded on the highly successful drive and ambition of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They lead by example, being inspirational teachers who only accept the best for the pupils and share their skills to attain this goal. As a result, teaching is continually improving.
- Pupils' progress is monitored rigorously and swift action taken if any pupil starts to fall behind. Consequently, any gaps in learning are promptly closed and achievement continues to get even better.
- The pupils benefit from an imaginative and varied curriculum. After-school clubs are very popular and the school's amazing productions show many skilled actors.
- The governors have a perceptive and accurate view of the school. They know how its popularity with parents has increased. This has led to an oversubscribed school. Space is now at a premium with some lessons being taught in a very small space, which restricts the variety of activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in 14 lessons and parts of lessons. She visited all classes.
- Discussions were held with staff, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Pupils' books were reviewed with a focus on writing in Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils from different classes read to the inspector.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's plans for future improvements, evaluation of performance and information about pupils' progress and safeguarding.
- The inspector reviewed the school's website.
- The views of 23 parents were analysed through the online questionnaire (Parent View). Other parents shared their opinions of the school at the start of the day.
- The inspector analysed 18 staff responses to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jennifer Platt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low and very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The proportion known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided for the children in local authority care, those from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is slightly above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school's population has increased by 30% since the previous inspection, including a rise in the number of pupils who join the school at other than the usual time.
- The school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy School status, Active Mark, Race Equality Mark Gold Award and Basic Skills Quality Mark twice for sustained improvement in basic literacy and numeracy skills.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise teaching to be consistently excellent by:
 - ensuring all lessons go at a swift pace and work is always hard enough to challenge pupils
 - increasing the richness of outdoor experiences for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ensuring that pupils always have sufficient space to learn in practical and imaginative ways.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Many children start school with low ability for their age. Overall achievement from their individual starting points is excellent, reflecting high-quality teaching and an exceptional curriculum.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, although their attainment as they enter Year 1 remains below average. They rapidly increase their social skills because of many opportunities to interact with others. Children grow in confidence to work collaboratively and independently.
- Progress from Year 1 to Year 6 is outstanding. It is best in Key Stage 2 where inspirational teaching accelerates progress.
- Attainment is average at the end of Year 2. It is rising especially in writing, in response to a focus on teaching letters and sounds. In 2012, the results of the national reading assessment in Year 1 were below average. This weakness was swiftly overcome. Pupils are now taught in small groups according to their ability and data shows a significant increase in pupils reaching the expected level.
- Results of national tests at the end of Year 6 are impressive. Overall attainment has been high for the last four years. Currently, the attainment of Year 6 pupils is above expectations but not quite as high as usual because of the number of newcomers during Years 5 and 6. These pupils have made excellent progress but a few gaps in their knowledge are still to be closed. Data and observations of Year 5 show a return to high standards, especially in the large numbers reaching above-average levels.
- In Year 6, there are some highly skilled mathematicians working at a level usually seen in secondary education. Writing is organised well with imaginative stories and accuracy in using more-advanced punctuation.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Year 2 pupils now make good use of letters and sounds to tackle words. There is healthy competition to see who has read the most books. Year 6 pupils read for understanding. They have an impressive knowledge of authors and support their preferences with reference to the author's style.
- Most of the pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are fluent speakers of English. All of these pupils, including newcomers who need help speaking English, make excellent progress.
- There is no significant difference between attainment in English and mathematics of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium and other pupils at the school. This includes the pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The majority reach the level expected for their age but fewer reach above this level. However, this gap is narrowing especially in reading and in Year 6. These pupils' progress is excellent and similar to that of other pupils.
- Help for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is most effective. This enables them to overcome both social and academic difficulties. As a result, they make outstanding progress. This reflects the extremely thorough promotion of equal opportunities for all.
- Pupils achieve very well in science and their work in music, art and design and technology is of high quality. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the future.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Outstanding teaching enables pupils to learn exceptionally well. No teaching observed was less than good and much was outstanding.
- Staff enjoy excellent relationships with pupils and manage them extremely well, leading to pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils are inspired by their teachers' imaginative ideas that not only make learning fun but also clarify some complex concepts. For example, in mathematics in Year 6, the variety of games made it very clear what ratio and chance actually means.

- In the best lessons, the pace is very brisk and teachers' enthusiasm shines through. Expectations are very high and this is clearly evident in pupils' books. Many have completed an amazing amount of work!
- Drama often captures and holds pupils' interest. When the teaching assistant visited the class as a duchess, very effective learning was assured. Pupils quickly spotted errors in her posh voice and this helped them to improve their writing.
- An excellent music lesson whizzed along, leading to pupils recognising musical terms, composing and playing their own pieces.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children were entranced by the colourful feathers that suggested that the honey bird from their story had visited their classroom. Good attention is given to teaching literacy and numeracy skills, including when working independently. Outdoors is not an extensive space and activities are not as rich as indoors.
- When teaching is good but not yet outstanding, the pace slows and some tasks are not always hard enough. This is the case when worksheets involve too much colouring.
- Subject knowledge is very good. Reading is taught most effectively. Practical activities are enabling pupils to remember their letters and sounds. Pupils' book reviews reflect the high quality of books read.
- Mathematics is taught very effectively. Introductions include lively, quick-fire questions often including a competitive element against the clock or their teacher. This inspires children to concentrate and apply their skills.
- Teachers track closely learning during lessons. When pupils in Year 2 struggled to calculate change from a pound, the task was revisited the next day. This ensures pupils' skills are built on successfully from lesson to lesson and year to year. Marking is very effective, tells pupils how to improve and makes it clear when work is not good enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils show their pleasure in school by their above-average attendance and exemplary behaviour. They are a delight to be with throughout the day. Pupils are welcoming, talk eagerly to visitors, remembering their name, and are extremely polite and well mannered.
- Pupils are justifiably proud of the school and their many achievements. In lessons and as pupils move round the school, they conduct themselves sensibly, show respect for others and an eagerness to be helpful.
- Attitudes to learning are outstanding. Pupils appreciate the efforts their teachers make to prevent their lessons becoming boring. One newcomer put her improvement in mathematics down to the teachers because, as she explained, she does 'not get stuck here because teachers take time to sort out her problems'.
- Safety is a priority in the school. Pupils recall many messages about looking after themselves and say they feel safe. Pupils have a thorough understanding of bullying and recognise how their actions, including calling names, can hurt others. There is no racism and pupils do not see bullying as a problem because they all know and admire one another. Older pupils value their role in acting as buddies to the younger children and also to newcomers to help them settle happily.
- The pupils who met the inspector were highly appreciative of the happy times they have in school and said, 'The school gives us a stepping stone to life.'

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership. The universal opinion of staff is that the school is well led and managed. Other leaders and governors play a full role in management and all are clear about the future. The school is extremely well placed to improve.

- Evaluation of what is happening in school is both reflective and challenging. Actions to resolve identified concerns are precise and their effect monitored closely. Success is evident in the improvement in teaching letters and sounds and its impact on reading.
- The rigorous monitoring of progress leads to help being targeted precisely where it is needed. This includes supporting pupils' welfare as well as their academic needs. As a result, pupils of all ability make excellent progress. Expectations of pupils' progress are very high and staff have to explain if a pupil falls short of the expected progress.
- Teaching is checked on thoroughly. Mentoring of any perceived weaker aspects is excellent with the outstanding skills of several teachers being shared with others. In this school, good is just acceptable and the aim is for all lessons to be the very best. Teachers have targets based on their performance and pupils' progress and salary awards are only allocated when targets are achieved.
- The curriculum provides memorable experiences for pupils. Weeks often revolve around a theme and include visits that make learning very purposeful. Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs. Older pupils visit London to see the sights and attend a famous show. These activities support very effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Links with the local authority are effective. Help is offered as needed and the local authority keys into the many skills in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an in-depth knowledge of the school. They review data and ask questions if there is a dip in progress. From reports and informal visits, governors know the quality of teaching. They recognise that using the library enables pupils to be taught in smaller groups but that this space is not conducive to practical activities. Governors manage the budget efficiently and monitor that staff earn salary rewards. They monitor the spending of the pupil premium funding and ensure that eligible pupils benefit from this support. Governors check that safeguarding meets requirements.

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	119663
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	411789

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Pilling
Headteacher	Donna McNicoll
Date of previous school inspection	2 March 2009
Telephone number	01706 214747
Fax number	01706 229064
Email address	head@st-marys-haslingden.lancs.sch.uk

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