

St James CofE Primary School

Hillside Avenue, Farnworth, Bolton, Lancashire, BL4 9QB

Inspection dates 9–10 October 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Too few pupils achieve well enough in reading by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The overall quality of teaching is not consistently good and there is not yet enough outstanding teaching.
- In some mathematics lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations to ensure that there is consistent challenge for the most-able pupils.
- Teachers do not always match the activities they have planned well enough to pupils' needs.
- In some of the younger children's books the work is not presented well enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- In the past year standards in writing and mathematics have significantly improved.
- Marking is effective across the whole school. Teachers clearly identify the next steps for learning and give pupils time to read and respond to comments.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they are eager to come to school.
- Following staff turnover, the new headteacher and senior leaders, who work as a strong team, are taking effective steps to improve the school.
- Governors and senior leaders are highly rigorous in checking the performance of teachers. Consequently, the school is improving and is demonstrating that it can improve further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons and parts of lessons taught by 13 teachers. An observation was undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' exercise books.
- Discussions were held with representatives of the governing body, two representatives of the local authority, senior leaders, and managers responsible for leading specific subjects and other staff and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation to help gain an accurate view of its performance, safeguarding policies, school-development plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, local authority reports, behavioural records and displays around the school.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of information on how the school checks the progress of the different pupil groups.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire) to consider. Inspectors had conversations with parents in the playground and looked at the responses to the parental questionnaire sent out by the school.
- Inspectors analysed 14 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Desmond Stubbs, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Machell

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- A large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and other pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is below that normally found.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher has been in post for four terms.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - all teachers understand what outstanding teaching looks like and that they use this to improve their own practice
 - teachers match work to the different abilities more accurately and make sure the more-able pupils are better challenged in mathematics
 - younger pupils improve the presentation in their books.
- Raise achievement in reading by ensuring that teachers check more precisely the gaps in reading knowledge and use this information to plan activities which will ensure pupils make more rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement of pupils requires improvement because standards in English, particularly reading, have not been good enough in the past two years. In 2012 pupils did not make enough progress in English by the end of Key Stage 2 and attainment was below the national average. In 2013 it is a much improved picture in writing but in reading still too few pupils make adequate or good progress from their different starting points. Attainment in reading is again below the national average.
- Lesson observations, scrutiny of work and hearing pupils read show that pupils have not fully made up for past gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. In particular, the most-able pupils progress too slowly in mathematics. Too often the books show they are doing work which is too easy for them.
- By the end of Key Stage 2 the attainment of pupils eligible for a free school meal is a year behind other pupils in English and two terms behind in mathematics. The gap between these pupils however has narrowed significantly since 2012 as a result of the effective use of the pupil premium funding. The improvements are quite recent and have not yet been sustained over time.
- The achievement of most pupils currently in school is good. Most pupils are now making good progress throughout both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and their attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. The school has rigorous systems for ensuring that teachers have a very good understanding of the standards pupils are reaching.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below those typical for their age. They make good progress and almost half of the children reach a good level of development by the time they start Year 1. Their knowledge and understanding of the world has improved significantly as a result of children being encouraged to raise their own questions and think critically.
- The literacy skills of the younger children are much better following improvements in the teaching of reading and writing. They now write confidently and, in 2013, by the end of Key Stage 2 the proportion of pupils making good progress in writing is high compared to other schools nationally.
- In mathematics pupils made outstanding progress by the end of Key Stage 2 and the school is rightly proud of the group of pupils who attained the highest level for this age. Attainment is above the national average.
- The pupils who come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and those speaking English as an additional language do as well as the other pupils and many of them do better.
- The most-able pupils are achieving well in most subjects. They make good and often outstanding progress and are reaching the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their individual starting points.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement as there is not enough outstanding teaching and a small minority of teaching is not yet good enough.
- In some mathematics lessons teachers' expectations are not high enough for the most-able pupils. Activities for these pupils are not challenging enough and one pupil said that when the teacher is 'going over something I understand I could be doing more'.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage teachers make careful checks of children's abilities and devise activities to ensure that they progress and are challenged. This is not always the case in Key Stage 1 and 2 where, in a small number of lessons, pupils find the work either too difficult

or too easy.

- The presentation in books of the younger pupils is not good enough. Teachers do not sufficiently encourage them to improve this aspect of their work. The older pupils however take more care and are proud of their achievements.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good. Learning is based upon children's interests, it encourages resilience and gives children opportunities to investigate their own questions, for example, 'Are all frogs green?' Children are encouraged to be creative and use their imagination. There is a strong emphasis on communication and improving the children's speaking and listening skills.
- The teaching of early literacy is good and in 2013 the proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the required standard in the phonics (letters and sounds) screening check was much higher than in 2012 and above the national average.
- The teaching of writing is consistently good and, as a result, many pupils are making outstanding progress. In these lessons teachers are very clear about the needs of the individual pupil and what is required to improve their writing. Teachers create exciting lessons which inspire the pupils to produce high quality written work.
- There is now a much stronger emphasis on the teaching of reading, which is generally good, and the school is now providing all pupils with books that will interest them. The school also provides incentives to encourage the pupils to read more widely and pupils talk enthusiastically about these.
- The quality of marking is effective across the whole school. Teachers clearly identify the next steps for learning and give pupils time to read and respond to comments. This has made a significant impact on progress in the past year.
- Teaching assistants are generally very effective working with groups of different abilities. Their support for pupils with special educational needs ensures these pupils make good progress.
- Parents are very positive about teaching and appreciate the effort that teachers are making 'so that learning is interesting'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour and safety of pupils is good and pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning. Parents say that their children are keen to come to school and that 'teachers take time to understand the individual child'.
- Pupils are polite, they open doors for adults and greet visitors with a confident 'good morning'.
- At lunchtime the dining hall is calm. Pupils even practised their times-tables while queuing up for their lunch! On the playground Year 6 pupils support the behaviour of younger children and they enjoy this responsibility. The behaviour at this time was good and the children talked about their 'friendly school'.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is not a problem. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe due to advice from visitors who come in and talk to them. They also understand how to stay safe when using the computer.
- Behavioural records are well maintained and these are closely monitored by the learning mentor. These show that behaviour over time is good.
- Attendance is good. It has improved over time and is well managed.

The leadership and management are good

- This school is rapidly improving under the skilled leadership of the effective headteacher who is well supported by governors and senior leaders. The gains have been predominately made since the arrival of the new headteacher. Some initiatives have yet to fully impact on raising achievement. In lessons most pupils now make good progress. However, the accelerated progress of pupils has not fully eradicated previous gaps in skills, knowledge and understanding.

The improvements have not been sustained over a long enough period for the school to be judged good.

- The new senior leadership team under the guidance of the headteacher has made a significant impact in a short time. The school's records clearly show how teaching has improved in the past year and this was confirmed by inspectors. The achievement of current pupils is much better than in recent years. The school is well placed to continue the upward trend.
- Middle leaders also contribute well and pupils with special educational needs are particularly well managed. Teachers work in 'coaching teams' and this gives them the opportunity to share their practice with each other, support one another and develop the skills to become future leaders. However, more could be done by senior leaders to help teachers understand what outstanding teaching looks like.
- Senior leaders have high expectations of their staff and have established policies which are now being consistently applied, such as the marking of work. These are having a significant impact on the quality of teaching and achievement.
- Arrangements for the performance management of teachers are excellent. Movement up the pay scale is carefully reviewed and linked to the national standards, the career stage of the teacher and the progress made by pupils in their class. Teachers are held to account in regular pupil progress meetings but they are also supported extremely well with well-targeted professional development.
- Regular, rigorous checks are made of teaching in a variety of ways by both senior leaders and governors. Governors take part in checking the pupils' books and by visiting classes with the headteacher. Teachers are given useful feedback on how they might improve.
- The curriculum is balanced and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education very well. Pupils' basic skills in literacy and mathematics are being effectively developed in most subjects. Strong Christian values permeate the school's work. Pupils are very positive about the many enrichment opportunities they have and very much enjoyed working with the artist in residence who was present during the inspection.
- The primary school sport funding has been effectively used to improve the skills of all staff thus ensuring sustainability. There are increased opportunities to take part in sport and to compete against other schools, which has led to greater participation.
- The local authority have provided training in how to improve the quality of teaching and given support to senior leaders and the governing body.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are clearly aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are well placed to provide both support and challenge. This is due to the number of governors who come into school and meet with senior leaders to check the quality of teaching and learning. This helps them to fully understand how teaching can be improved and the progress pupils are making. Governors also have a very good understanding of performance management and how it is linked to the career stage of the teacher and that pay progression is not automatic. They have allocated their resources very effectively, in particular the pupil premium funding, and the budget is well managed. The governing body have received up-to-date training from the local authority.

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	105208
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	426078

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Woods
Headteacher	Sally Leighton
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2012
Telephone number	01204 572587
Fax number	01204 793625
Email address	office@st-james-farnworth.bolton.sch.uk

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