

St James-the-Less Roman Catholic Primary School, Rawtenstall

Unity Way, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancashire, BB4 8SU

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils thrive within an extremely caring environment. Attitudes to learning are exemplary. Pupils are polite, considerate and very aware of the needs of others.
- Achievement is good. Standards by Year 6 are above average and rising. Pupils read well, write competently and have a good grasp of the basics of mathematics.
- Many pupils have a good general knowledge and absorb information quickly about many subjects.
- Spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is outstanding. This underpins the outstanding behaviour and safety.
- Good teaching with some outstanding examples, secures good progress across the school. Pupils have access to a wide range of additional activities, for example, in music, sport and educational visits.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and pupils eligible for pupil premium make good progress. This is because of effective support.
- The large majority of parents applaud the school in the way it develops their children both academically and personally.
- The headteacher is very effective. He has a very clear picture of how to improve the school further. The management of teaching is very effective and leads to improving achievement.
- Given the current quality of leadership, which includes an excellent governing body, the school is extremely well placed to improve further in future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Girls do better in writing than boys, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Although basic skills in mathematics are good and improving, pupils are less confident in applying these to solve mathematical problems and investigations.
- The targets for pupils in literacy and mathematics tend to be short term. They do not give pupils a clear picture of how to improve over a longer period of time.
- Pupils do not have enough time to reflect on, and respond to, marking. At times comments are not focused sharply enough on the next steps for learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 lessons of which three were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were conducted with governors, staff, a representative from the local authority and three groups of pupils.
- Evaluations of a range of school documentation added to the inspection judgements. These included the documents relating to safeguarding, the development plan, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance and records of pupils' attainment and progress.
- An evaluation was made of 37 responses by parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The views of 11 staff were considered by analysing their responses to staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

David Byrne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British background.
- The percentage of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average
- The percentage of pupils eligible for the pupil-premium funding, which in this school provides additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The current headteacher took up post in September 2011.
- The school has achieved Healthy School status and received the Racial Equality mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the current improvement in pupils' achievement and raise it further by:
 - adapting the curriculum to inspire boys in all classes to enjoy writing and reach higher standards
 - widening opportunities for all pupils to apply their skills of numeracy to solve mathematical problems and investigations
 - implementing strategies to deepen the pupils' knowledge and understanding of their targets and how to improve their work in future
 - ensure that the marking policy is consistently applied so that pupils receive clear guidance about their next steps in learning and are given time to reflect and respond to teacher's comments.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average. This outcome represents good achievement and good progress given the children's abilities when they start school.
- Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development that are just below those typical for their age. They make good progress and most reach average standards by the start of Year 1. Children develop good levels of personal, social and emotional development. Many speak confidently, but in reading and writing children are less skilled.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils improve at a good rate. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are typically just above average.
- Between Years 2 and 6, a higher than average percentage of pupils make better than expected progress. Progress is stronger in reading than writing with girls being more enthused to write than boys. Across the school, pupils enjoy books and have a wealth of knowledge about contemporary authors. Most read well and standards are above average.
- In mathematics, while progress is better than expected nationally, and improving quickly, there is scope for more pupils across the school to work at levels that exceed expectations for their age. In Years 5 and 6, however, expectations have been raised and an increasing percentage of pupils are predicted to gain a much higher than expected standard for their age in the national tests at Year 6. In some classes pupils are not yet skilled enough at applying their good understanding of basic mathematics to solve mathematical problems and investigations, which holds down attainment.
- Teaching is adapted effectively to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. As a result their progress is good and they are included in all aspects of school life. The progress of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is tracked systematically. The attainment of those pupils eligible for free school meals is better than that of similar pupils nationally in English and mathematics and is close to the average for all pupils in the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers know their subjects well and this enables lessons to provide good or better learning for pupils. Excellent relationships within classrooms mean that pupils are able to learn without any disruptive behaviour.
- Teachers create classrooms with vibrant displays to reinforce pupils' learning, for example, about the Victorians and features of Mayan culture. Both reading and mathematics are taught well and good quality training develops the skills of staff. The teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) has improved recently, it is now good, and affects positively standards in reading and writing.
- Some teaching is outstanding. It is epitomised by lessons that are pacy, involve pupils actively, and enables them to be independent. Excellent use is made of resources to support learning including information and communication technology, use of video clips and pupils recording and sharing ideas with individual whiteboards. During one outstanding lesson in mathematics, the pupils' imaginations were ignited because they used a computer to research the goal scoring records of two famous football teams. In so doing, pupils gathered and interpreted data, and deepened their understanding of terms such as mode, mean and median.
- Where teaching is not of the highest quality, although still good, pupils are directed more than necessary. This restricts their ability to make their own decisions within the framework of the lesson. Occasionally, the planning is not sharp enough to meet the needs of all pupils. At other times, pupils are given too little time to reflect on their achievement in lessons.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are identified, supported well, and enabled to participate fully in all aspects of school life.
- Teachers systematically check on the progress of each pupil. Swift action helps any who are stalling in their learning. Marking is regular and targets for pupils help them to improve in

literacy and mathematics. At times, marking lacks sufficient guidance about the next steps in learning. Targets are used across the school but they do not always help pupils to understand how to improve over a long-term period, for example, how to move from their current level of working to one which is above that expected for their age. This hampers pupils' ability to take ownership of their own learning and drive up their standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Staff know the needs of each child and the difficulties encountered by some families and give effective support where possible. Excellent links with outside agencies within education, health and welfare enhance the support offered by the staff team.
- Pupils are the school's best ambassadors. A very warm welcome from happy, smiling faces meets everyone visiting it. Excellent manners and courtesy are a normal part of everyday behaviour; for example, pupils hold doors open for each other and older pupils encourage and help younger ones during playtimes.
- The large majority of parents feel that behaviour is at least good and pupils are adamant that it is outstanding. Inspection evidence confirms the pupils' views: behaviour is excellent and pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. Their love of learning is reflected in consistently high attendance.
- Bullying of any sort, including aggressive behaviour, is exceptionally rare. Records held by the school confirm that racism is non-existent. Pupils take pride in contributing to their school community and willingly take on responsibilities. They are involved in making decisions about their school through structures such as the school council, the views of which staff take seriously. Pupils are rightly proud of their efforts to raise funds for local, national and international causes.
- The school does a lot to involve pupils in the community. Year 3 pupils, for example, work closely with families in the locality acting as a friend and helper.
- Pupils know the choices required to be healthy and safe. They benefit from participating in initiatives to stay safe in and around roads, have access to the 'Life Education bus' to learn about how to be healthy and safe and benefit from nutritious, well-cooked school lunches. They are acutely aware of the risks when using the internet.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads by example, regularly teaching and frequently visiting lessons. Decisive actions are raising expectations for pupils and academic achievement is rising rapidly.
- Ambitious senior leaders contribute to the improvement. All staff share a common purpose to give the best to pupils. Discrimination is unheard of and all pupils have an equal opportunity to achieve well. Where differences exist, for example, in the achievement of girls and boys in writing, action is narrowing the gap.
- The performance of staff is managed very efficiently. Good quality training develops staff expertise. Productive links with local schools widens experiences for pupils and enhances the development of staff.
- Rigorous systems for tracking the progress of learners enable staff to plan for the differing learning needs of all groups of pupils. Pupils at risk of falling behind are identified and action taken to support them.
- The school provides a well-balanced curriculum, enhanced by a range of visits and visitors to widen learning experiences and promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lessons are not, however, always suited to the interests of boys. The school is in the process of refining the curriculum to meet the needs of boys better.
- A good partnership exists with parents. Communication is very good and includes weekly newsletters, a well-constructed school website and regular text messaging. Some parents ask for more information about their child's progress. The school is in the process of developing ways of

doing this.

- Good support by the local authority has contributed significantly to improving some aspects of teaching and management. It acts as an effective support for the school.

- **The governance of the school:**

- The school benefits from an extremely strong, well trained governing body with a high level of expertise. There is a determination to give the best to the pupils and their families. It holds the headteacher and senior staff to account by setting precise targets, for example, for achievement and behaviour and safety. Good use of finances secures good value for money from school spending. The quality of teaching is regularly checked, any underperformance is tackled and salary increases are linked to the contribution made to pupils' learning. The pupil-premium funding is spent wisely, for example, by extending the support for such pupils needing extra help and ensuring their full inclusion in school events. All statutory requirements are met for securing the safeguarding of pupils, staff and adults.

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	119665
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	403407

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Atherton
Headteacher	Gary Hall
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2007
Telephone number	01706 216190
Fax number	01706 831552
Email address	bursar@st-jamesless.lancs.sch.uk

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