

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Bacup

Tong Lane, Bacup, Lancashire OL13 9LJ

Inspection dates

2–3 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and the governing body have turned the school around. It now provides a good quality of education.
- The headteacher has made effective, bold decisions. She and her enthusiastic leadership team have brought about considerable improvements to the curriculum that have ensured that it is rich and interesting.
- The school's Christian values are at the heart of all it does.
- The governing body knows the school well and make a valuable contribution to school improvement.
- Significant improvements in the quality of teaching throughout the school have resulted in the vast majority of pupils making good progress.
- The teaching of phonics has improved. The large majority of pupils now meet the expected standards by the time they leave Year 1.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is evident from their improved attendance.
- Leaders are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities for safeguarding and pupils feel safe in school.
- Pupils' behaviour has changed dramatically. They are now well behaved, and polite and friendly towards each other and to visitors.
- Personal development and welfare are good. Pupils are proud of their school and themselves. They are emerging as confident, enthusiastic and caring individuals.
- Children in early years have a good start to school life and make good progress from their starting points. However, there is a lack of consistency in early years environments.
- Although attainment is improving, some pupils, including the most able, are still not achieving the outcomes of which they are capable in English and mathematics.
- Some teachers are too cautious in their teaching, resulting in some lessons lacking energy and interest.
- Opportunities to extend and challenge pupils, especially the most able, to think more deeply about their learning are sometimes missed.
- Teachers do not routinely ask sufficiently probing questions to encourage pupils to reason, and articulate their understanding.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise achievement in English and mathematics across the school, particularly for the most able, so that more achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that teachers:
 - feel confident to add their own flair to their lessons, to ensure that they capture the interest of all pupils
 - raise the level of challenge offered to pupils, especially the most able, so that they have the opportunity to think more deeply about their work and extend themselves
 - are confident to ask questions of pupils to encourage them to reason, deepen their thinking about what they are learning and articulate their understanding.
- Ensure that there is a consistency of environment across the early years classes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- St Mary's is a good school. The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have responded decisively to the issues raised at the previous inspection. Their actions have reversed the decline in standards. They have done this by raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, transforming pupils' behaviour and radically changing the school's approach to teaching. Together with the whole staff team, leaders have led the way to providing good opportunities for pupils to achieve and develop as well-rounded individuals.
- The school's Christian values are a prominent part of school life. Pupils and staff talk frequently about values such as respect, kindness and tolerance. These qualities were much in evidence during the inspection. The good understanding of such values has resulted in pupils who are caring, considerate and respectful of each other and the wider community.
- The headteacher has very successfully steered the school through a very challenging time. She has admirably led by example and played a central part in getting the school back on track to offer the very best education to pupils. Relationships between staff are very positive. They express a strong commitment to leaders and are very proud to work at the school, which now benefits from a stable, happy and dedicated team.
- The headteacher is ably assisted by two assistant headteachers. Together, they are a skilled, enthusiastic and focused team. They accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their reflective, proactive approach is evident in a detailed school development plan. This outlines precisely how leaders will address those areas needing further attention.
- Leaders have inspired the whole staff team to work together to develop the school. As a result, the staff team is motivated to make sure that there is continuing improvement. Leaders have developed effective systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders have been successful in ensuring that pupils make good progress throughout school. Evidence shows that this improvement needs building on to ensure consistency in challenging pupils to raise attainment at the higher standard. Leaders have improved teaching and recognise aspects needing attention. They rightly see themselves as being on a journey to improve.
- Around three quarters of the pupils in school are eligible for pupil premium funding. Leaders use funding effectively to reduce the barriers to learning that may be experienced by disadvantaged pupils, including the most able. Leaders closely monitor and evaluate disadvantaged pupils' progress. This enables these pupils to be successful and to be part of everything the school has to offer.
- The primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding is also used appropriately. Pupils benefit from good-quality specialist sports coaching and a number of sports-related clubs after school and at lunchtime. Pupils say how much they enjoy sport and recognise the value of physical activity as a part of being healthy.
- Senior leaders have developed a clear, straightforward and thorough system to assess

pupils and to check on their progress in English and mathematics. They have taken time to ensure that the information gathered is precise and accurate. Leaders and governors review this information regularly. They also use information to discuss pupils' learning with teachers and to plan opportunities to help pupils catch up if needed. Teachers have started to collect assessment information for subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics to gain an overview of the progress pupils make in other subjects.

- The leadership and organisation of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are good. Identification of need is thorough, and resources are of a good standard. Leaders use funds effectively. Staff understand the welfare needs of these pupils, which ensures that they succeed in their learning and personal and social development. Good-quality systems and procedures are in place to regularly check on the progress of individual pupils.
- The school offers a varied, interesting and enjoyable curriculum. It engages pupils and contributes to their enjoyment of learning. Leaders are now keen to further develop the content and depth of the curriculum offered to pupils. The curriculum is enriched by providing real-life experiences to stimulate and excite pupils, such as school trips and visitors to the school. Reading, writing and mathematics are woven across the curriculum wherever possible. Curriculum leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility. They benefit from regular opportunities to participate in professional training and meet with colleagues from other schools, for example to develop practice and checks with regard to assessment.
- Well-promoted spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that the school is a calm and considerate environment where pupils mix happily. Pupils learn about the local, national and global community through assemblies and the curriculum. They have a range of pupil groups dedicated to organising activities such as fund-raising for charities and raising awareness about the environment. There are frequent opportunities to learn about tolerance, respect for differences and the rule of law. For example, pupils recently enjoyed being involved in Black History Week. They were also involved in discussions about democracy while learning about votes for women and the suffragette movement.
- The school has been well supported by the local authority and the diocese, which offer expertise in leadership and teaching and learning as and when needed. The school works with a local teaching school and is supported by a local primary school. The headteacher has used support skilfully to match priorities and not overface staff. Leaders and teachers are members of a number of local networks of schools and are encouraged to take up regular opportunities for training.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is effective. The reinvigorated governing body has shown determination and focus in its work to significantly improve St Mary's.
- Governors share a whole-hearted commitment to improving the school and the pupils' academic, social and emotional outcomes. They make an active contribution to the life of the school.
- Members of the governing body use the range of their experience and expertise to

good effect. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and provide appropriate challenge to leaders. They have a good understanding of the school's effectiveness and pupils' progress.

- Governors make sure that the pupil premium and the PE and sport grants are spent effectively and make a difference to pupils' achievement and well-being.
- The governing body is diligent in carrying out its responsibilities to safeguard pupils and, to this end, has appointed a safeguarding governor to oversee and monitor safeguarding and welfare-related matters.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures are compliant and fit for purpose. Leaders demonstrate a high degree of knowledge of all matters relating to safeguarding and welfare.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a safe and secure environment by promoting the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Leaders maintain detailed safeguarding records. Staff, senior leaders and governors undertake regular and appropriate training, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism.
- The school's pastoral support is a strength. Staff, overseen by the headteacher, coordinate every aspect of the care that is offered to vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Leaders are very aware of the high level of vulnerability of many of the pupils in their care. They are persistent in cases where the school is concerned for a pupil's welfare. Good relationships with other agencies and with parents and carers ensure that pupils are kept safe and that their welfare needs are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have worked extremely hard and successfully to significantly improve the teaching, learning and assessment in school. Leaders have ensured that all members of staff have high expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning. They have introduced new approaches to teaching phonics, English and mathematics, all to great effect. This has resulted in good progress.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. Staff model consistent expectations and approaches for pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils rise to this by working hard and behaving well. Pupils have a good attitude to learning and take pride in their work, which is always well presented. They say that they enjoy their lessons and like coming to school, particularly because they 'like their teachers' and teachers 'help them learn'. When they struggle, pupils say that adults will always help them to understand.
- There is a high level of consistency from all teachers in delivering the agreed

approaches to teaching English and mathematics. This has been an important factor in accelerating the progress of pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They explain new ideas clearly and simply, relating difficult concepts to prior learning. Pupils are offered good-quality resources to support their learning. Some teachers are less confident to add their own creativity to their delivery for fear of moving too far away from the agreed way of working. This is understandable because teachers have been under a high level of scrutiny. However, because some teachers are hesitant about adding their own touches, some lessons lack energy, and opportunities are missed to share enthusiasm and add additional interest.

- Teachers plan activities that offer pupils different levels of challenge. Sometimes, the level of challenge is not sufficient to encourage some pupils to use their knowledge and skills to think more deeply about their work and extend themselves. A few pupils are not learning as much as they could. This is particularly the case for a few of the middle-ability and the most able pupils.
- Teachers' questions do not routinely deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers sometimes challenge pupils through their questioning. When this is the case, pupils are supported to make links between different areas of learning, which deepens their understanding. Too often, however, teachers' questioning of pupils is superficial. It does not encourage them to think through and reason. Additionally, there are limited opportunities for pupils to articulate their understanding of what they have learned.
- Teachers know their pupils well and have good-quality assessment information to track the progress that different groups of pupils make.
- Teachers identify quickly when pupils struggle with their learning. They are provided with support and a range of learning opportunities help them to catch up. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- The school offers good support to those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. It is broad and clearly targeted. Leaders plan additional support well, resulting in these pupils making good progress in lessons and over time.
- The development of the teaching of reading, writing, grammar and mathematical skills is a high priority in school. Teachers use good-quality reading texts effectively in classes to create a range of interesting and stimulating activities.
- Teachers promote writing systematically so that pupils are equipped with the skills to write for a range of purposes to a good standard. A focus on increasing pupils' vocabulary across school is beginning to take effect. Books often provide pupils with a stimulus for longer pieces of writing, as well as using links to other curriculum areas, such as science, history and religious education. This gives pupils a sense of purpose and added interest.
- Teachers are confident in their delivery of mathematics. Pupils are being provided with a structured and thorough understanding of important basic number skills and are increasingly offered opportunities to practise their skills and apply this learning to problem-solving activities.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good and an important part of school life. It is guided by the school's strong Catholic ethos and values. Staff and governors are committed in their responsibility to ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment in which pupils can learn.
- The school offers a good personal, social, emotional and health curriculum that is woven into all that the school does. Leaders consider it important to equip pupils with skills that promote the value and importance of well-being, respect and being responsible and well-balanced citizens.
- Staff treat pupils with consideration and ensure that the school makes everyone feel welcome and valued. Adults model respectful behaviour in lessons, around school and in the way they engage with pupils. As a result, pupils behave similarly and are thoughtful and compassionate.
- The very large majority of parents who spoke to inspectors praised the school and the work of the staff. They said that their children are happy and well looked after. A number of parents were keen to say that their children enjoyed school and that staff are 'easy to talk to'. Typical sentiments included, 'a sense of community' and, 'The school is much better now.'
- The vast majority of pupils throughout school are happy to talk about their learning. Pupils told inspectors how proud they were of their school and how they were well looked after by adults.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection were confident that teachers dealt with any unfriendly or negative language towards pupils quickly. Parents who spoke to inspectors said that bullying has happened in the past, but is now rare. Where it has occurred, it is dealt with successfully.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Compared to the time of the previous inspection, behaviour has been transformed. This has been achieved by leaders and staff consistently promoting high expectations of behaviour, to which pupils respond in a positive manner.
- Pupils conduct themselves well. They take pride in their appearance. Improvements in their self-confidence have resulted in them being delightfully polite and well mannered. They are keen to smile at passers-by as they walk down the corridor and happy to engage with visitors. Staff and pupils know each other very well and are friendly, supportive and encouraging. As a result, the school is a calm, orderly and purposeful place to learn.
- A productive atmosphere in classrooms means that the vast majority of pupils have a very positive attitude and visibly enjoy their learning. At the time of the inspection, some pupils were seen to be disappointed at having to stop their work when it was

time for morning break. Another group of pupils eagerly put their hands up to answer a question from the teacher before one had been asked. Pupils are attentive and eager to participate in lessons and work well, supporting each other. This is particularly evident in upper key stage 2, where there is a very industrious atmosphere in classrooms.

- Pupils consider behaving well to be very important and are delighted when they are recognised for their good conduct. As a result, they are fully aware of how to behave and the consequences of poor behaviour. They say that incidents of inappropriate behaviour do happen but are rare, dealt with quickly by teachers and responded to by pupils sensibly.
- A few pupils have difficulties in managing their behaviour. They are well supported by staff to ensure that their behaviour does not get in the way of their learning and does not distract others.
- The systems for checking absence are thorough and conscientiously applied. Good attendance is rewarded and has a high profile in school. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved over the last few years and is now comparable to national averages. The persistent absence of pupils, particularly those that are disadvantaged, was highlighted as an area for improvement at the last inspection. Persistent absence is now monitored meticulously. The leadership team has worked hard with this group of pupils and their parents and has had some notable success in increasing their attendance. As a result, persistent absence has halved and currently sits below the national average. The school's family support team is very successful in supporting pupils and families who might be struggling. They are well respected, and relationships with parents and pupils alike are strong.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- At the time of the previous inspection, pupils across the whole school were considerably underachieving. The dynamic actions of the senior leaders and the positive response from staff have resulted in significant improvements in English and mathematics. The vast majority of pupils across the school are now making good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' phonic understanding in key stage 1 is improving. Many pupils join the school with weak reading skills. By the end of Year 1, effective teaching has enabled the large majority to catch up with other pupils nationally. Staff plan additional support for those pupils working below the expected standard to make sure that they make good progress from their different starting points.
- There is a similar rising picture at the end of key stage 1. In 2018, systematic improvements led to the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing and mathematics to being close to the national average, and slightly lower for reading. The school's assessment information shows that standards are steadily improving. Work in pupils' books confirms that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders were disappointed with some of the results at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. They felt that these did not reflect the substantial improvements and progress that

Year 6 pupils had made during their final year in school. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing, and mathematics, and grammar, punctuation and spelling was below that seen nationally, although close in English. Pupils' workbooks and leaders' assessment information show a striking improvement in the progress pupils have made over the academic year. Examples of pupils' work indicate a remarkable contrast in presentation, productivity and quality. These books confirm an extremely positive picture of good progress throughout key stage 2.

- Assessment information indicates that few pupils achieved at higher standards at the end of both key stages in 2018. Leaders have been decisive in their actions to address this and to ensure that more pupils reach the standard of which they are capable. For example, teachers have had an increased focus on providing appropriate challenge for pupils according to their abilities. This has benefited the most able pupils and is evident in pupils' books. An increasing number of these pupils are now beginning to make good progress, although there is still more work to be done.
- The school has a large number of pupils identified as eligible for the pupil premium funding. The school's achievement information seen during the inspection indicates that the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally is diminishing. They are making similar rates of progress as their peers.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Teachers and teaching assistants offer effective support and ensure that pupils succeed in their learning.

Early years provision

Good

- Early years is well led. There is a clear view about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Detailed plans are worked through effectively to ensure that those areas that could be better are improved. A focus on the importance of good-quality development of staff has ensured that adults are skilled and confident in creating the best learning opportunities for children.
- Many children start school with skills and knowledge below, and some well below, those typical for their age. Their skills are particularly low in communication, reading, writing and number. Teaching is good and teachers have high expectations of what children can achieve. By the time children leave early years, the vast majority have made good progress.
- The recent improvements in provision, including the more dominant focus on phonics, writing and number, are having a noticeable positive effect on learning. There are steady, year-on-year improvements. In 2018, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was comparable to national averages. This has ensured that children are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Leaders track and monitor children's progress closely. As a result, they are quick to respond to any changes in the learning needs of children. The assessment information that teachers gather on a day-to-day basis is used effectively to plan a curriculum for children that is both interesting and lively. Information is used precisely to plan specific activities that meet children's needs.

- Nursery and Reception classes are in separate areas of the school. The consistency of the inside and outdoor environments across the classes can vary. Provision in Nursery is the stronger of the two. For example, in Reception, there is a lesser quality and richness of outdoor resources offered to children. This does not entice them to play and learn in this area as much as it should. Also, some parts of the classroom in Reception are untidy.
- Despite the differences in the environment, across both classes staff have established routines quickly and classrooms are organised effectively. Adults demonstrate good subject knowledge. Activities are fun and capture the children's imagination and allow them to practise their skills. Adults regularly join in with children's play, using opportunities to teach skills and model good learning habits. For example, to the delight of the children, the teacher joined in their play in the home corner. She encouraged them to use knives and forks and blow on the imaginary hot pizza. When she left this area, children continued playing this game and talked about the cutlery they would use and blew on the hot meals they had made.
- Leaders use additional funding well to provide resources and support for disadvantaged children. They have a good understanding of the impact this has on children's learning. Such children make similarly good progress to that made by others and achieve well.
- The importance placed on reading, writing and mathematical skills is very evident, with regular chances for children to write, practise their letters and sounds and use number. The development of language, including speaking, is a high priority, along with building self-confidence. There are a number of children joining early years who have limited communication skills. The focused work of adults has ensured that many children feel confident and eager to say hello to visitors and chat about what they are doing. Adults engage with children very well and are skilled at asking questions to draw out children's understanding, and to encourage them to talk and help them feel self-assured.
- Children in early years are happy and well cared for. The statutory welfare requirements of early years are met. Safeguarding is effective. Risk assessments are thorough and the classrooms are a safe place for children. The strong emphasis on creating a caring and nurturing environment is evident from the very positive relationships adults have with children, and children have with each other. Consequently, children's behaviour is good. They play and learn together well and are very motivated to learn.
- There are positive relationships between staff and parents. Parents say that they are well informed about their children's learning. Before children start school, staff spend time getting to know children and families so that they feel ready and comfortable to join their new class. This includes invitations to a 'getting to know you' meeting, visits home and opportunities to spend time in their new classroom.

School details

Unique reference number	119662
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10055783

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diana Doherty
Headteacher	Kathryn Bishop
Telephone number	01706 873123
Website	www.stmarysbacup.org
Email address	head@st-marys-bacup.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 June 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is high and above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school part-way through their education is high when compared with the national average.

- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant changes in staffing. This has resulted in several classes being taught by a succession of temporary teachers. However, a stable complement of teaching staff has now been in place for approximately a year.
- The school has been led by a number of interim full-time and part-time associate and executive headteachers since September 2013. The substantive headteacher took up her post in September 2015. The leadership team has been further enhanced by the addition of two assistant headteachers.
- The school was served with a compulsory academy order in July 2016. It is intended that the school become part of the John Henry Newman multi-academy trust. The date for this has not yet been confirmed.
- The school has benefited from a range of support brokered from the local authority and Salford Diocese. St Mary's also has close partnerships with Rochdale Catholic Federation of schools, Rossendale Catholic schools and Whitworth Cluster.
- A section 48 inspection was conducted in June 2018 by the Diocese of Salford. The school was graded as good in all areas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. They observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They also observed pupils at playtime and during lunchtimes.
- The inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books, including the books of children in early years.
- An inspector listened to a small number of pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator, the family support worker and the early years leader. They also met with the member of staff responsible for safeguarding and a group of middle leaders.
- An inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the chair. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority, and with another on the telephone. She also spoke to a representative of the diocese on the telephone.
- A group of pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with an inspector and inspectors also spoke informally with pupils at playtimes and around the school.
- Inspectors considered 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and talked to staff during the inspection to take account of their views.
- They also talked briefly with 14 parents before school and looked at the two responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: information on pupils' attainment and progress; the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan; records of checks on the quality of teaching; and the school's curriculum planning documents. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Doreen Davenport

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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