

School report



St Kentigern's RC Primary School

Bethnall Drive, Fallowfield, Manchester, M14 7ED

Inspection dates

30 September–1 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The overall effectiveness of the school requires improvement. Strong leadership has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. However, outcomes for pupils require improvement as some substantial gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, due to the legacy of previously inadequate teaching, remain unplugged.
- Governors do not hold leaders fully to account for the impact that pupil premium spending has on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and other senior leaders provide ambitious and determined leadership. They are not prepared to accept second best. As a result, the school has made significant improvements since its previous inspection.
- A strong team in the early years ensures that children get off to a good start in their education at St Kentigern's. They make good progress and are well prepared to start Key Stage 1.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving rapidly. Many classrooms buzz with the enthusiasm of teachers and the excitement of pupils. Children say that they now enjoy their learning.
- A well thought out curriculum develops pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness well.
- Respect and tolerance for all is a golden thread that runs throughout the school. Pupils welcome everyone warmly. Their behaviour shines in the classroom and on the playground. Their positive attitudes help them to make good progress in lessons.
- Governors have steered the school through a turbulent period of significant change. Their appointment of high-calibre leaders has been pivotal in moving the school forward since its previous inspection.



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?

- Improve outcomes for pupils further by:
 - continuing to use assessment to identify and plug the gaps in pupils' skills
 - ensuring that the good start that pupils get in the early years to develop their language skills is built on as they move into Year 1
 - continuing to build on the strong progress that disadvantaged pupils are now making so that higher proportions are working at and above age-related expectations in all subjects.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that governors use assessment information to ask challenging questions about the impact that pupil premium funding has on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils
 - assessing the risk of radicalisation and extremism to pupils of the school.

- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - further reducing the number of pupils who are late for school.



Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since taking up her role at the start of the summer term, the headteacher's resolute and aspirational leadership has brought about a seismic shift in the culture and ethos of the school. She is supported ably by two recently appointed senior leaders, and her unrelenting pursuit of excellence has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders are not prepared to accept second best. They communicate their high expectations with clarity. No one is in doubt of the direction of travel and what is expected of them. There is a new buzz of excitement and cohesiveness about the school.
- No-nonsense actions have successfully eradicated the inadequate teaching seen during the previous inspection. Lessons are observed and teachers' planning and pupils' books are checked regularly to help sustain and drive further improvements. The headteacher leads by example. In common with other senior leaders, she models lessons to help strengthen teaching.
- Senior leaders know precisely the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This information is used to map out ambitious plans for improvement and to measure the impact of actions already taken. These plans serve as a useful tool to ensure that everyone knows what their role is in working towards highly aspirational targets.
- Middle leaders are equally ambitious for pupils in the school. Despite being new to their roles, they have wasted no time in taking actions that have already had an impact in raising standards of teaching and outcomes for pupils. The literacy leader, for example, has led recent training that is already reaping the rewards of improving spelling, punctuation and grammar across the school.
- The well-designed curriculum encourages pupils to consider current topics in a thoughtful way and develops their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness strongly. In Year 6 for example, the class teacher skilfully used a biblical psalm to lead the class into a mature discussion about the current immigration crisis in Europe. The newly introduced curriculum is also helping pupils to connect their learning. Topic books across the school, for instance, are now beginning to show greater examples of purposeful writing. There is a strong emphasis on the arts and culture. A recent project celebrated the Irish and Indian heritage of many pupils within the school. Specialist music and art teachers, supplemented well by extra-curricular clubs such as street dance, further enhance this provision. However, pupils do not currently have enough opportunities to help them understand the similarities and differences between different world faiths.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have opportunities to volunteer and take up roles in the school and the community. For example, pupils recently held a cake sale to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Research. Pupils have a strong understanding of democracy and the rule of law. Pupils held their own election, mirroring that of the general election in May.
- Arrangements to protect pupils and keep them safe (safeguarding) are effective and are given a high priority. Procedures to check the background of adults to ensure they are cleared to work with children are up to date. All staff have recently attended child protection training. Further training to update new staff on how to protect pupils and assess the dangers of extremism and radicalisation is taking place this term.
- Sports funding is directed to good effect by school leaders. A specialist sports coach works alongside teachers to improve their knowledge and skills. A range of extra-curricular sporting activities run throughout the year. Pupils are proud of their sporting successes; such as the rounders and tennis teams reaching Manchester finals and the football team winning an inter-school tournament. The school has recently been awarded the Sainsbury's School Games Gold Award (an award that recognises commitment to and the development of competition, school sport and physical education).
- In the past pupil premium funding (additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free schools meals or who are looked after by the local authority) has not always been used effectively to narrow the gap in achievement compared to other pupils. The new senior leadership team are now rigorously tracking the progress of every pupil to ensure that additional funding is making a positive difference. Highly ambitious targets are set for disadvantaged pupils. Teachers are held fully to account for their achievement. As a result, the progress of this group of pupils is improving rapidly and in line with other pupils within the school.



■ The governance of the school

- Governors have steered the school through a turbulent period of significant change. Their appointment of a new leadership team has been the catalyst for significant improvements since the last inspection. Governors are frequent visitors to the school. This enables them to see for themselves current strengths and weaknesses. Regular open and honest conversations with the headteacher and other leaders, such as the special educational needs coordinator, help them keep a watchful eye on the impact that actions are having on improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- The governing body place a high importance on their safeguarding duty. A number of governors have attended training to ensure the safe recruitment of staff. The Chair challenges the school appropriately to ensure that suitable checks have been undertaken to allow newly appointed staff to work with children. Sound financial planning has also allowed a new perimeter fence to be constructed around the school.
- Governors have a good understanding of how sports funding and pupil premium funding is spent. However, governors do not have enough comparative information to ask searching questions about the impact pupil premium funding is having on narrowing the gap with other pupils nationally and within school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils say that their work is now interesting, fun and challenging.
- Teachers use what they know about pupils' knowledge and skills to plan lessons that motivate and challenge them appropriately. In Year 2 for example, pupils enthusiastically developed their vocabulary and use of adjectives through writing menus for the 'Mad Hatter's Tea Party'.
- Teachers and many support staff use questioning skilfully to assess and then deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. In a Year 4 literacy lesson, the class teacher used a range of open-ended questions to help pupils to think about, and consequently improve, their use of vocabulary to enrich their writing.
- Teaching assistants work well in partnership with teachers to support pupils' learning. The phonic knowledge of support staff in the early years, for instance, contributes strongly to the good progress children make in reading. However, a small number of teaching assistants currently lack sufficient skills and strategies to fully support pupils' learning effectively.
- In most lessons, teachers carefully check pupils' work to gauge the progress they are making. They use this information to adapt lessons to precisely meet the needs of pupils, adding challenge or extra support where necessary. During a Year 3 mathematics lesson for example, the class teacher quickly adjusted her lesson plan to support a group of pupils who had not got to grips with a multiplication and division challenge. As a result of her actions, pupils' learning was not allowed to falter.
- In many mathematics lessons, pupils are now being given opportunities to consolidate and extend their learning through reasoning and investigative activities. Pupils' understanding of column subtraction was deepened in a Year 5 mathematics lesson by having to calculate the value of numbers that had been replaced by letters. However, in a small number of mathematics lessons, inspectors saw examples of teachers' planning that was too ambitious. Teachers attempted to move some pupils' learning on before they had fully consolidated their understanding. As a consequence, learning stuttered for some pupils during these lessons.
- Teachers have high expectations for their pupils. Success is celebrated and as a result the confidence of many pupils is beginning to blossom. A culture of respect and trust between pupils and teachers means that pupils have little fear of failure. They are taught that it is good to 'wobble' when faced with a difficult task. As a result, pupils are developing the resilience to tackle increasingly more challenging work and make progress in their learning.
- There has been a stark improvement in the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment of writing since senior leaders took up their posts. The quality of handwriting has been transformed; pupils now take great pride in the work they produce. Opportunities to develop and apply writing skills across other curriculum areas have also been enriched. In science for example, pupils enhanced their skills through writing a recount on 'how to extract DNA from a kiwi fruit'.
- The school feedback and marking policy is applied consistently across the school. Pupils are given time to consider teachers' comments and often complete extra tasks set that help to improve their work.



Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. As one parent stated, 'teachers show genuine warmth and care towards students and challenge negative behaviour'. Pupils are proud to wear the uniform that shows they belong to St Kentigern's. Teachers take time to ensure that success is recognised in the classroom at every opportunity, helping to develop pupils' self-esteem.
- Leaders and teachers successfully promote an ethos of respect and tolerance that permeates the school. Assemblies on topics such as 'I know what human dignity means' encourage pupils to think deeply about how they treat one another. Pupils play harmoniously alongside and with one another at playtimes; irrespective of culture, gender or ethnicity. They view the different ways that people live their lives with a great deal of maturity and sensitivity. As one pupil said to inspectors 'Everyone should be able to choose and should be happy doing whatever they want to do.'
- Adults are excellent role models and as a result have earned the respect of the pupils of the school. Lunchtime organisers are held in high regard by pupils who value them leading and joining in their playground activities.
- High value is placed on supporting pupils' emotional well-being. The work of the pastoral mentor in working with families is highly regarded by pupils and parents alike. Her work has a significant and positive impact on pupils' happiness, welfare and safety. The recent addition of a classroom to support pupils who are facing behavioural, emotional or social challenges has also started to ensure that pupils are developing skills and resilience to help them access their learning.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. The headteacher delivers assemblies that deal with topics such as inappropriate touching and the dangers of drugs. Pupils have also been taught about road, water, rail and fire safety. Pupils in Year 6 are taught how to deal with the types of peer pressure they may experience as they move on to secondary school. However, the school recognises that further work needs to be undertaken to help younger pupils recognise the dangers of gang culture.
- Pupils are aware of the many forms of bullying including those linked to racism, social media and homophobia. They say that any rare bullying incidents are sorted out quickly and effectively through the school's 'problem solution' system.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils and teachers say that behaviour has improved significantly since the appointment of the new senior leadership team. As one pupil explained, 'Because Mrs Harrold has put so much effort into making the school as good as it is, nobody wants to let her down.' Pupils' behaviour in lessons is a significant strength and contributes well to the progress they are now making. Behaviour outside of classrooms is also strong. Pupils hold doors open for one another and move around school in a calm and orderly fashion. Inspectors were greeted warmly and politely by pupils across the school. Teachers model a consistency of expectation across the school and any rare incidence of disruption is dealt with quickly and firmly.
- Pupils' attendance fell in 2014/15. However, leaders' immediate actions have resulted in a significant turnaround in the proportion of pupils absent from school. Absence is followed up rigorously and attendance is given a high profile in school. Records show that recent attendance (April–October) is in line with that seen in other schools nationally. The proportion of pupils who miss school often (persistent absence) has also fallen in the same period to below that seen nationally.
- While significant improvements have also been seen in punctuality, small numbers of pupils arrive late at school each day. Senior leaders are very aware of this issue and it is a priority for improvement this year.



Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- The quality of work in pupils' books, learning in lessons, assessment information and 2015 test results all evidence that senior leaders have begun to rapidly improve standards throughout the school. Nonetheless, work is at a relatively early stage and some significant gaps in pupils' understanding and skills remain due to the legacy of previously inadequate teaching.
- Achievement in writing, for pupils at the end of Year 6, fell sharply in 2015 with only two thirds of pupils making the progress expected. However, pupils' books show strong signs of rapid improvement. Poorly presented handwriting, seen at the time of the previous inspection, has been eradicated. Furthermore, a sustained focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar, particularly following staff training in September, has made inroads into plugging the significant gaps in skills.
- Pupils who left Year 2 in 2015 were better prepared to move into Key Stage 2 than previously seen at the last inspection. Achievement in reading, writing and mathematics improved substantially so that the proportion of pupils reaching the standards expected was broadly in line with that seen nationally. Furthermore, higher expectations from teachers ensured that the achievement of most-able pupils also improved in reading and mathematics. This represents good progress from their starting points in Key Stage 1.
- Achievement in reading is good across the school. The strong knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) of teachers and support staff in the early years is built on across Key Stage 1. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening test improved to be broadly in line with the national average in 2015. Those pupils who read to inspectors chose their books carefully and showed an interest in non-fiction as well as a range of fiction genres. Most younger pupils applied their phonic knowledge to successfully read challenging words. However, while older pupils could successfully infer and deduce information from texts, some were less successful at applying phonic skills to read difficult words.
- Pupils' mathematics books across the school show a considerable shift in expectation and improvements in the quality of teaching from April 2015 onwards. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved rapidly. There is now a clear level of challenge for both lower-ability and most-able pupils. Teachers model correct methods and time is given in most classes to consolidate skills. More recently (from September), opportunities to deepen thinking through problem solving are evident. The proportion of pupils making expected progress from their starting points, by the time they left Year 6 in 2015, increased sharply but remained below that seen nationally.
- School assessment information, pupil interviews and evidence seen in pupils' books shows that disadvantaged pupils are currently making progress in reading, writing and mathematics that is at least in line with other pupils in the school. The proportion of pupils who are working at the expected levels for their age in all subjects has also increased significantly since 2014. However, in several year groups, over half of this group of pupils are still working below the levels expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The relatively recent appointment of a new leader of the provision for pupils with special educational needs has brought about significant improvements since the previous inspection. Improved teaching and an understanding of the needs of this group of pupils means that in the lessons observed by inspectors, pupils made progress that was at least as strong as that of other pupils.
- The introduction of a new curriculum is showing early signs of contributing to improved achievement in subjects such as history and science. Pupils are being given greater opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of topics through writing activities. In Year 6 for example, pupils developed their understanding of life during wartime through writing 'air raid diaries'.
- The use of specialist teachers in subjects such as physical education, art and music and the provision of a broad range of extra-curricular clubs are also ensuring that pupils' achievement in these subjects is improving.



Early years provision is good

- Children get off to a flying start in the early years. Good leadership and teaching from a well-established team ensures that children leave Reception well prepared to meet the demands of the Key Stage 1 curriculum. From their starting points children make good progress so that the proportion of pupils leaving with a good level of development is above that seen nationally. The achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils within the school was smaller than that seen nationally in 2014. Information provided by the school shows that this gap is continuing to narrow.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have very strong subject knowledge. In a phonics lesson, for example, staff expertly modelled what part of the mouth is used to form different sounds. This contributed strongly to children making good progress, pronouncing words and sounds correctly during the lesson.
- Adults skilfully use a range of well-chosen questions to develop children's language and thinking skills. While a group of children worked on the numeracy wall, for example, a teaching assistant used a range of questions to probe and cultivate their understanding of the order of numbers.
- Older children in the Reception class are excellent role models for younger children joining the school. They share resources kindly with one another and happily take turns to use outdoor equipment. Children respond quickly to instructions from adults and behaviour is strong because of clear routines and high expectations. Independence is encouraged through children choosing their own snack and where to eat it. However, a small number of children sometimes do not make hygienic choices and place their food on the floor.
- The outdoor environment has been revitalised this term. As a result, pupils actively and enthusiastically engage in interesting activities. The 'Three Little Pigs' building site was particularly popular with children during the inspection. Adults enabled the children to develop their communication and language skills well by discreetly encouraging their imaginative play. Other areas of the environment build on children's interests. Autumn 'feeling bags', for instance, helped the children learn about the current season, while also developing their range of vocabulary.
- Accurate assessment is used effectively to match activities to the needs of all groups of pupils. In a mathematics activity, for instance, the class teacher built on children's previous knowledge and understanding enthusiastically to help a group of most-able pupils order a range of large numbers onto a number line.
- Children are well prepared for their transition into Year 1. However, the firm foundations put in place in the early years to develop language and communication skills are not always developed fully as children start Year 1. Furthermore, transition arrangements into early years from other settings are not always sufficiently developed to allow teachers to build on earlier learning.
- Leadership is good. The early years leader has a firm grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Her plans for further improvements are clear and well thought out. Training for staff is updated regularly and ensures that teaching skills remain sharp. Children are kept safe and are supervised appropriately. Parents who spoke to inspectors described the greeting from the staff as 'warm and welcoming every day'. Parents also stated that they were well informed about the achievement of their children.



School details

Unique reference number	105584
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10001639

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	389
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gerry Hodson
Headteacher	Barbara Harrold
Telephone number	0161 224 6842
Website	http://www.st-kentigerns.manchester.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@st-kentigerns.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 May 2014

Information about this school

- St Kentigern's is a larger than average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is high.
- The proportion of pupils for whom English is not, or believed not to be, their first language is broadly similar to the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding 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, and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below the national average.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club which is open to all children every day.
- In 2014 the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school was judged to have serious weaknesses at its previous inspection in May 2014.
- Since the last inspection a new headteacher and senior leadership team have been appointed. Fourteen teachers have left the school in the past 12 months. Five new teachers joined the school in September 2015.



Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in each class of the school, including two joint observations with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, three representatives of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning, assessment information and reports on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime, lunch and before and after school. They also met formally with two small groups of pupils to chat about their learning and behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors heard a number of children read.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school and the work in the outdoor areas.
- A range of pupils' books were checked jointly with senior leaders from the school.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents at the start of the day. They also took account of the 44 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school's own parent questionnaire. Inspectors also took note of the 19 responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

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Gillian Burrow
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