

St Raphael's Catholic Primary School

Huddersfield Road, Millbrook, Stalybridge, Cheshire, SK15 3JL

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The very effective and determined headteacher, along with strong and focused senior leadership and governance, has successfully improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- From their starting points, all groups of pupils make good progress in all key stages in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly between Years 1 and 6. Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has risen and is above average.
- Children's learning in the early years gets off to a good start. Activities are enjoyable. A strong focus on developing children's personal skills ensures they are ready to learn in Year 1.
- Pupils' good progress reflects good teaching over time. Expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are high. Pupils are motivated by challenging tasks.
- Well-trained teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' progress, particularly in delivering programmes of support for learning.
- The teaching of reading is particularly effective. A significantly above average proportion of pupils reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. They are clear about expectations of their good behaviour. They are proud of their school and of their achievements.
- Effective arrangements are in place to ensure pupils are kept safe and secure. Pupils say they feel very safe. They are cared for well.
- A broad range of rich experiences, work and activities ensures the curriculum is exciting for pupils and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils really enjoy school and this reflects in their above average attendance.
- Governors are extremely supportive. They challenge leaders effectively and ensure the school continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In the early years, assessments of what children already know and can do sometimes lack the rigour needed to clearly and effectively inform staff of children's next steps in learning. This means that the activities provided do not always have a clear learning purpose. This is particularly the case for outdoor learning activities.
- The roles of middle leaders in checking pupils' progress and the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility are still developing and so they do not yet make a fully effective contribution to driving school improvement forward. Their subject knowledge is not always strong enough to impact on improving pupils' knowledge and skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons, taught by different teachers and many of the teaching assistants. Inspectors conducted walks around the school to observe learning in many different areas. They listened to pupils read from Years 2, 5 and 6. An inspector observed support for pupils in whole-class sessions and with individual pupils.
- Inspectors looked in detail at the work in pupils' books, files and online from across the school. They held three meetings with groups of pupils and individuals to talk about their work and their views of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, teachers and support staff. Meetings also took place with administration staff. An inspector held a discussion with representatives from the governing body.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's summary of its view of its own performance and the school development plan. Policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding and information about pupils' attendance and behaviour were considered. Inspectors scrutinised records of the school's checks of the quality of teaching and learning, information about pupils' achievement and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered the 62 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and looked at summaries of recent school questionnaires sent out to parents. The inspectors also took account of the 19 responses to the staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jean Tarry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Machell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Raphael's Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported through the pupil premium, is in line with the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Early years provision is full-time for most children. However, there are some part-time places in Nursery.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of provision in the early years in order to ensure that children always make good progress in developing their skills by ensuring that:
 - assessments of what children already know and can do are rigorous and clearly informs children's precise next steps in learning
 - activities provided always have a clear purpose, particularly those as part of learning outdoors.
- Develop the roles of middle leaders in checking pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, improving their subject knowledge, so that they make a fully effective contribution to driving school improvement forward.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides very purposeful and effective leadership. His constant drive to provide a high quality of education for pupils reflects in pupils' higher standards now evident at the end of Year 2 and 6. The deputy headteacher is particularly instrumental in checking and reviewing how well the curriculum enables pupils to learn and, as a result, supports the headteacher really well.
- The senior leadership team continually share ideas and look for ways to improve the school even further. Expectations are high. Their checks of the school's performance, including through their analysis of data of pupils' attainment and progress, are rigorous and effective. As a result, leaders have a good understanding of what is working well and what requires further attention. Any pupils who are not making good progress are quickly identified and supported. Leaders know that provision in the early years, while good overall, is not always as consistently good as in other key stages.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection as a result. Senior leaders make regular checks on its quality, carefully checking teachers' plans for lessons, the lessons taught, as well as evidence of the quality of teaching over time seen in pupils' workbooks. From this for example, leaders have established a consistent approach to marking pupils' work across the school so that pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- The roles of middle leaders in checking the pupils' progress and quality of teaching are still developing. They do not yet make a fully effective contribution to driving school improvement forward. Their subject knowledge does not always enable them to impact effectively on improving pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Staff are well supported to improve their teaching practice. 'The training we are offered is focused on the priorities for our pupils' learning' reflects a typical staff comment. Any weaker aspects of teaching are tackled quickly through targeted support. The management of teachers' performance through setting targets linked to pupils' performance is effective.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is well enriched, striving to make it as exciting as possible. Pupils experience a range of activities, such as residential visits to London, working with a dance teacher, learning French or gaining knowledge about global connections. The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through the curriculum is a huge strength of the school.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Leaders and managers are committed to and successfully tackle discrimination of any kind. They ensure that positive relationships are fostered, both among pupils and with parents and outside agencies.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is used well to enable disadvantaged pupils to make equally good progress to others in the school. Whole-school provision is carefully and regularly reviewed, including any impact of attendance and behaviour on the achievement of eligible pupils.
- Leaders work hard to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. The current Year 6 democracy project, for example, helps to ensure pupils develop a really good overview of British values, as well as aspects of the current political climate. Pupils learn about democracy as they vote to elect school council members. The school website shows examples of how pupils learn about life in a multicultural society.
- The primary physical education and sports funding is used effectively. Staff work alongside qualified sports coaches and this has a positive impact on improving the school's teaching of physical education. There are now more sports clubs provided and more pupil involvement in competitions and sports festivals.
- The local authority provides effective support to the school, including through providing governor training. The school is held in high regard by the local authority. The school now only receives light-touch support.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and are effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is effective.
 - The governing body knows the school well. Governors use information about pupils' progress effectively to compare the school's performance with that of other schools locally and nationally. They provide strong support and rigorous challenge to leaders and share in their quest for continual school improvement. Expectations for pupils' achievement are high.
 - Governors know how good the quality of teaching is. They continually explore what needs to be done to improve it further. They know there remains scope to further improve the provision in the early provision, particularly outdoors. They know the importance of checking the performance of teachers and ensure that this links to any pay progression. They ensure that any weaknesses in teaching are tackled, while challenging and supporting senior leaders.

- Governors ensure that the pupil premium is used effectively and know the impact it has on eligible pupils. They are, however, not yet fully clear about the impact of primary physical education and sports funding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' attitudes to their work are good and this makes a positive contribution to their good progress, especially higher up the school.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. 'It's a safe place. Our rules are clear to follow. We all like coming to school' reflects a typical pupil comment.
- There is a clear whole-school behaviour policy in place that works particularly effectively. Pupils understand how it applies both in the classroom and on the playground. They know how their good behaviour will be rewarded and the sanctions if they do not meet the school's high expectations. They make informed, sensible and mature choices about their own behaviour. Pupils are clear about what is and is not acceptable.
- Pupils develop an increasing sense of responsibility, including taking on roles such as lead learners. Older pupils often help and support younger ones with their work, such as reading and organising games for them in the playground.
- Certificates and house points celebrate pupils' achievements in their work, attitude and behaviour. Pupils are well motivated to achieve and are regularly awarded for excellent achievement throughout the year.
- Occasionally, children in the early years are not motivated and engaged by their tasks, such as when activities lack a clear purpose and this sometimes hampers their achievement.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Some aspects of this work are of particularly high quality, for example, the level of support offered for vulnerable pupils and their families. Any pupils that find learning how to behave well difficult are extremely effectively supported so that their behaviour improves.
- Pupils clearly recognise the difference between bullying and falling out. They report that any instances of bullying are rare and when they do happen they are confident that they can ask for help and that adults ensure that issues will be resolved quickly. Through carefully planned activities in class, pupils develop a good understanding of different types of bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe, such as on the internet. Pupils say the lunchtime supervisors are effective as they sort out any issues very well.
- The school has impressed effectively upon pupils and parents the importance of children attending school regularly. The systems and processes in place for checking on attendance are impressive. Attendance has improved and is above average. Pupils really do enjoy coming to school. They like receiving their certificates for good individual and class attendance.

The quality of teaching is good

- School information, inspection evidence and work in pupils' books support the view that the quality of teaching in all key stages is good over time. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and this reflects in the pupils' higher standards across the school.
- The teaching of English is good, especially in reading. Improvements in the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make), including through an intensive programme of support, have had a positive impact on raising standards in reading. This is especially evident in the proportion that reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils make good progress in writing as a result of good teaching. The quality of marking of pupils' written work across the year groups and subjects is consistent and effective. Pupils receive very clear instructions about how to improve their writing, as well as the time to address any misconceptions. Pupils demonstrate an appreciation of the audience for their writing. Teaching ensures that pupils carefully consider the most appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure to use. The most able writers are challenged effectively, such as when following their own story map they created about Romulus and Remus and the formation of Rome.

- The teaching of mathematics is strong. Tasks are well matched to pupils' ability, including for the most able. Pupils are provided with activities and challenges that stretch their mathematical thinking skills effectively.
- Expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are high. Pupils are moved on expertly as soon as they need more challenge. Older pupils, for example, grapple with percentages and calculations related to stocks and shares to enable them to make a profit and are delighted when they have achieved their goal.
- Between Years 1 and 6, pupils are continually motivated and engaged by their tasks and activities. Teacher assessments of what pupils already know and can do are rigorous and used effectively to plan future learning. Activities closely meet pupils' varying needs and abilities well and have a very clear purpose. This, however, is not always the case in the early years and as a result, learning occasionally slows.
- Teaching assistants are strength of the school. They are well trained and focus on pupils' well being, personal development and academic achievements. They are instrumental in delivering high-quality programmes of support in English and mathematics.

The achievement of pupils is good

- After an overall good start to learning in the early years, between Years 1 and 6 all groups of pupils continue to make good progress. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards across the school have risen since the previous inspection and continue to do so. In previous years, by the end of Year 2 pupils have reached overall standards that are in line with the national average. However, because of improvements in teaching, standards are now improving quickly across Key Stage 1, especially in reading. Expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are high. Pupils complete activities that are well matched to their level of ability and therefore often achieve their best.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics have risen rapidly since those reported in the previous inspection. In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected Level 4 overall in reading, writing and mathematics was well above average. This represents good progress from their previous starting points. The proportion of pupils making expected progress and doing better than this also compared favourably with the proportion that did so nationally, particularly in reading and writing. School data, confirmed by inspection evidence, show that this improving trend is set to continue in Year 6 this year, especially in mathematics.
- The most able pupils achieve well. They are challenged in their learning and are well motivated to do their very best, particularly in Year 6. In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 overall was above average and significantly so in reading. In 2014, a few pupils also achieved the higher level 6 in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 6 in 2014, their attainment was about one term behind other pupils in the school in mathematics, three terms behind in reading and about two terms in writing. However, their attainment was similar to other pupils nationally in each of these subjects. This gap in school is narrower than the gap seen between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. School data and inspection evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils across the school achieve equally well to others. Any remaining gaps continue to close as a result of rigorous tracking of the achievement of pupils and good teaching.
- Disabled pupils and those who have a special educational need make good progress because of the effective support that they receive from teaching assistants and the specialist support teacher.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in reading. Reading tasks present ongoing challenges. Pupils enjoy the wide range of reading materials on offer in classrooms. They have a good understanding of high-frequency words and this supports them very effectively to succeed with reading tasks.

The early years provision is good

- The majority of children enter the early years with knowledge and skills that are generally in line with those typically seen in children of this age. As a result of good teaching and effective support within a calm, safe and enjoyable learning environment, children make good progress. When they leave the Reception Year, a very large majority reach a good level of development and are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Teaching places a strong emphasis on developing children's social skills in readiness for Year 1. Children

clear up after themselves both inside and outside. They confidently make their own decisions about what they want to play and learn next. Relationships are positive and children behave well. Children follow instructions from adults carefully and as a result, safety is good. They articulate very clearly what they like about their school, for example the farm visit.

- Learning is enjoyable. Children enjoy investigating their own interests, mark making, planning their own city, dressing up in the role-play area, and forming numbers in the air with ribbons.
- Children generally make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. The teaching of letters and the sounds they make is effective.
- Although activities are typically well matched to children's varying needs and abilities, staff assessment of what children already know and can do sometimes lack rigour. As a result, children's next steps in learning and the activities provided sometimes lack a clear purpose. This is particularly the case when learning outdoors.
- Early years leadership and management are effective, ensuring that provision is typically good. Partnerships with parents are strong. Parents agree that their children receive a good start to their education. Active links with different pre-school settings helps to ensure that children settle into school life quickly.

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	106242
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	464725

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Evans
Headteacher	Peter Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2013
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