

Preston St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

New Hall Lane, Preston, Lancashire PR1 5XB

Inspection dates

28–29 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over the last 18 months, the school has had four different headteachers and there has been considerable instability in staffing. During that time, standards have declined.
- The quality of middle leadership is variable because some staff are new in post. Development plans are not precise.
- The curriculum does not cover all the areas it should. It does not ensure progression in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Some teachers have not yet adapted to the demands of teaching age groups that are new to them. Others have an insecure command of the subjects they are teaching.
- Teachers do not make effective use of questioning to check on, and extend, pupils' understanding.
- Some pupils, especially girls, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are not making the progress of which they are capable in some subjects. Consequently, standards are too low.
- Teachers do not have a firm command of assessment processes.
- Behaviour during playtimes and lunchtimes is not good enough. The playgrounds are unattractive and ill equipped and pupils do not have enough to do during playtimes.
- Although there has been some improvement, attendance continues to be below average and too many pupils arrive late at school.
- The information on the school's website is incomplete.

The school has the following strengths

- The associate headteacher has an accurate view of the school. He has stabilised the staffing and gained the support of his colleagues and the governors in addressing the school's weaknesses.
- Provision in the early years is well led and the youngest children make good progress from low starting points.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - appointing a strong, experienced, permanent headteacher to run the school
 - ensuring that middle leaders undertake training to use the new assessment processes consistently, so that they have an accurate, shared view of pupils' performance and can work together to ensure rapid improvements in standards
 - placing an unremitting focus on raising standards in all areas of learning, in all year groups
 - putting renewed effort into improving the performance of girls, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in different subjects, so that no group falls behind the performance of the rest of the school or the rest of the country
 - ensuring that all plans have precise targets for improvement, so that it is clear whether the actions taken are having a positive impact on standards
 - ensuring that the curriculum is broad and balanced, covers all the required areas of learning, and provides continuity and development in pupils' learning, in every subject across the school
 - ensuring that the information on the website is updated regularly, so that parents and other stakeholders are fully informed about the work of the school.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - all teachers receive the necessary training, so that they are confident in the subjects they are teaching and in dealing with the particular age groups for which they are responsible
 - teachers make better use of questioning to check on pupils' understanding
 - the work provided for pupils matches their abilities, so that they all make rapid progress
 - all staff have the necessary skills to manage pupils' behaviour effectively.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
 - making the playground more attractive and providing a wide range of equipment and facilities, so that pupils can engage in more constructive activities during playtime
 - raising expectations of pupils' behaviour in the dining hall, so that lunchtimes are calm, ordered occasions when pupils can further develop their social skills
 - ensuring that the attendance rates overall, and for specific groups of pupils, improve to be at least in line with averages nationally
 - working with families to secure a rapid reduction in the number of pupils arriving late for school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the school has experienced considerable turmoil. It has had four changes of leadership in the last 18 months and there has been considerable instability in staffing. The current associate headteacher, who is a highly experienced leader, has been working at the school since September. He has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has established a clear programme for bringing about improvements. He has stabilised the staffing and has redefined responsibilities at senior- and middle-management levels. The responses to the staff questionnaire and discussions with teachers show that most of his colleagues support these changes.
- The headteacher has worked very closely with the local authority and the diocese to establish a wide range of appropriate initiatives to address specific areas of weakness. These include revising assessment processes, improving the reading standards of girls and reviewing subject leadership. The timescales and responsibilities for implementing these initiatives are clear. However, the intended impact on pupils' attainment and progress is less well defined.
- The headteacher is working to improve the system for the appraisal of staff, so that the methods for reviewing the quality of their work are more rigorous and rewards are more closely related to the standards of performance.
- The senior leaders accept that there has been a decline in standards since the last inspection. However, some are too ready to attribute the sudden drop in key stage 2 results in 2017 to leadership and staffing difficulties and the nature of the Year 6 pupils. They have been slow to recognise that, in 2017, standards were below expectations in every year group, not just Year 6. It is therefore going to be a greater challenge than they realised to raise standards to their former levels.
- The quality of leadership at middle-management level is variable, partly because some staff are new to their responsibilities. They are not always confident in their interpretation of data and do not have a shared understanding of what the current standards are.
- The coordinator for SEN knows the pupils in her care well. She ensures that their individual plans are reviewed and updated regularly. She also ensures that individual pupils receive appropriate additional help from staff within the school, as well as from outside agencies. However, she does not have the means of ensuring that this provision is having sufficient impact on pupils' progress.
- Almost all the parents who spoke to the inspectors were very complimentary about the school. They were particularly pleased with the systems that have been recently introduced to provide them with daily electronic feedback on their children's work and behaviour.
- The curriculum does not ensure that, in subjects other than English and mathematics, the children develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a coherent way. As a result, work in successive years sometimes shows a decline, rather than an

improvement, in performance. There are also gaps in the coverage of required areas of learning, particularly in science.

- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. This is supported by close links with the church and other faith communities in the area.

Governance of the school

- As with the senior leadership team, there has also been disruption in the work of the governing body. The chair is new to this role, although he is a long-standing governor. He has attended a wide range of relevant training to equip him for his new responsibilities. His colleagues have also undertaken up-to-date training on all the relevant areas, including safeguarding.
- The governors recognise that the school requires improvement and are providing the headteacher with the necessary support for this task. They are also making good use of the additional guidance and resources provided by the local authority and the diocese.
- The governors are aiming to appoint an experienced, permanent headteacher to the school by the summer term 2018. They have a clear understanding of the qualities and experience required to lead a school of this size, in these circumstances. They are also developing contingency plans, in case they cannot make an appointment within the intended timescale.
- The information published on the school's website is incomplete. For example, it does not include the records of attendance at governors' meetings or the most recent information on the use of the additional funding to develop physical education (PE) and sport.
- The governors make appropriate use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. However, it is difficult to determine how effectively it is used because there are no clear targets against which to measure its impact.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has rigorous systems for checking on the suitability of adults to work with children. The site is secure and entry to the building is strictly controlled.
- Staff and governors have received the appropriate training in safeguarding. The staff who spoke to the inspectors knew how to identify possible signs of abuse and what to do if they have any concerns about the welfare of a child. The school works successfully with a range of agencies to support families who need additional help.
- The pupils who met with the lead inspector said that they are happy and safe at school. They also feel safe on the way to and from school. They said that bullying does occur but staff deal with it effectively. None of them had experienced racist bullying, although this has occurred in the past. This matches the school's behaviour records. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe on the roads and near railway lines. They also receive swimming lessons, so that they are safe in and near water. As a result of regular practices, pupils know what to do and where to go in the case of a

fire. They also have training on how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media. They are able to share any worries or concerns with staff and they are confident that they will get appropriate help.

- The parents who spoke to the inspector said that they had no concerns about the safety of their children at school. Their views echoed those of the staff who completed the online survey.
- The school is vigilant about ensuring that the pupils do not fall victim to any forms of extremism. The policies and practices of the school focus clearly on developing a cohesive community, based on the principles of mutual respect, help and compassion.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Because of staffing changes, some teachers are still adapting to teaching year groups and subjects that are new to them.
- The work in pupils' English books shows that teachers make a considerable effort to encourage pupils to read a wider range of styles and to apply their knowledge of grammar to improve the quality of their writing. However, some teachers pay too little attention to ensuring that the presentation of pupils' work is of a consistently high standard.
- In mathematics, teachers provide pupils with a range of opportunities to work with objects and pictures, in order to help them understand abstract ideas. They also place considerable focus on ensuring that pupils produce accurate diagrams to help them with their calculations.
- Teachers encourage pupils to make connections between the subjects that they are learning. For example, in an English lesson, the pupils were asked to draw on the work they had done in science to produce an independent piece of imaginative writing.
- Teachers are not always confident in the subjects they are teaching and, therefore, do not adapt the work sufficiently to suit pupils of differing abilities. This was particularly evident in a computing lesson seen.
- Teachers rely heavily on answers volunteered by the pupils. They rarely use supplementary questions to extend pupils' thinking.
- The teachers make regular use of the school's electronic rewards system to recognise pupils' success. Pupils and parents are very enthusiastic about this.
- In most instances, the pupils behave well. However, where the work is too easy or too difficult, they lose interest. In one lesson, for example, the behaviour of a small group of pupils was very disruptive and detracted from the learning of others. The staff did not have effective techniques for dealing with the situation.
- Teachers and teaching assistants generally work well together. In some instances, however, the teaching assistants do not take a sufficiently active part in lessons. As a result, the pupils they are supporting make insufficient progress.
- Since the beginning of this term, the headteacher has introduced a new system for tracking the attainment and progress of pupils. He has set clear expectations of progress. However, not all teachers are confident in using the system.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The pupils are confident, friendly, pleasant and welcoming. They respect each other and are ready to compliment each other on their work. For example, when the inspector was discussing a display that a pupil had prepared at home, others came to say how good it was and how impressed they were.
- In the meeting with the lead inspector, the pupils took turns to present their ideas without interrupting each other. They listened carefully to each other's views, even when they did not necessarily agree with them.
- The displays around the school show that pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own feelings, not to be afraid to be different from others and to consider how they can demonstrate particular values in their own lives. For example, the pupils are urged to 'be the reasons why someone smiles today'. Posters show how pupils have helped each other by, for instance, acting as translators for children and families who have recently arrived in the country.
- The pupils develop an understanding of all the major world religions and visit a variety of places of worship. They contribute to the life of the school and the wider community through their membership of the school council and through their charitable work. They also have opportunities to visit the theatre or museums and to hear presentations by visiting speakers. The pupils who spoke to the lead inspector were very enthusiastic about the sporting and other extra-curricular activities available to them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- During playtimes, the pupils are happy. However, behaviour is boisterous, sometimes bordering on being rough, with a considerable amount of 'play fighting'. In part, this is because the pupils do not have enough to do during these times. The playground is stark, with very little play equipment. There is nowhere for pupils to sit down and take part in quieter activities.
- During lunchtimes, there is too much noise, with pupils having to shout at each other to be heard. Staff do little to check this or to help the pupils develop good table manners.
- The pupils who spoke to one inspector said that behaviour in the school is 'OK but could be better'.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally good but, at times, usually when they are not given enough to do, the pupils' attention wanders.
- After the last inspection, overall attendance rates declined to below average. In 2016, the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities was in the lowest 10% of maintained schools nationally. Persistent absence was also worse than average for disadvantaged pupils and boys. There was little improvement in 2017.

- Most recently, the school has worked hard to deal with low attendance. This has included establishing a 'walking bus', to enable pupils to come to school together, and developing the breakfast club. Staff have also helped families who are experiencing particular difficulties by collecting their children from home. These approaches are leading to improvements. Attendance figures for this term are higher than for the equivalent time last year but are still below average.
- Although there is some improvement, the number of unauthorised absences in the school is too high.
- Too many pupils arrive late at school in the morning, even when they are accompanied by their parents.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes in the school have declined since the last inspection. The deterioration was particularly marked in 2017.
- The performance of pupils in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 was above average in 2014. In the following two years it was below average overall, though girls improved. In 2017, however, the performance of girls as well as boys was below average. The performance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has also declined over the last three years. The leaders expect phonics standards to improve considerably by the end of the current academic year. However, in the phonics work observed during the inspection, the majority of pupils were working below the standard expected for their age.
- From 2013 to 2015, the overall attainment of seven-year-olds was consistently below average, with reading being the weakest subject. In 2016, results improved to average. This improvement was maintained in mathematics and writing. However, in 2017, results in reading were again slightly below average. The school anticipates a rapid improvement in results at this key stage. However, the work seen in books and in lessons indicates that the majority of pupils currently in key stage 1 are working below the expectations for their age. For example, the problem-solving and reasoning skills of Year 2 pupils in mathematics are underdeveloped, as are investigative skills in science. In subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils make insufficient progress from Year 1 to Year 2.
- Results for 11-year-old pupils were above average in mathematics and reading from 2013 to 2016. However, there was a sharp decline in both subjects in 2017, with all pupils, boys, girls and disadvantaged pupils being well below average. Writing results have been generally above average since the last inspection. However, in 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in their writing was below average. Girls did not perform as well as girls across the country. There was a sharp decline in the results in English, and grammar, spelling and punctuation, with all groups of pupils being below average. In contrast to this, results in science have been average or better for the last two years.
- The progress made by pupils between the ages of seven and 11 has declined. In 2017, progress was average in writing but below average in mathematics. In reading, it was in the lowest 10% of maintained schools nationally.

- The work of pupils currently in key stage 2 is of variable quality. In mathematics, the pupils are able to produce accurate diagrams to support their calculations and thinking. However, some of the most able pupils are not making the progress that they should. In English, the most able pupils are able to write at length and in depth, using complex sentences. They also have a good command of grammar. However, handwriting is underdeveloped. In Year 6, the number of pupils not using joined-up writing is considerable. The pupils who were heard reading in key stage 2 did so with a good degree of fluency and expression, although the meaning was sometimes lost because they rushed.
- The school's figures show that, at the end of the last academic year, all year groups were performing below expectation. The decline in standards was not a 'blip' confined to Year 6, as some staff believe. Therefore, there is a considerable way to go before results in key stage 2 return to the level they were at when the school was last inspected.

Early years provision

Good

- The leader of the early years is experienced and knowledgeable. She has a clear vision for the development of this aspect of the school's work and a well-thought-through rationale for the use of resources and deployment of staff. Through regular meetings, she and her colleagues are able to check on what has been covered and how well the children are developing. This ensures that any child who is falling behind receives appropriate support, in a timely way.
- The school's figures show that, at the beginning of this academic year, only 10% of the children entering the early years had skills and understanding typical for their age. Boys were generally weaker than the girls. More than half had a delay in their language development.
- From these low starting points, the children make good progress, largely as a result of a number of well-focused projects to support specific groups of children. For example, there are separate projects to speed the progress of White British boys and boys of Pakistani heritage. Another project focuses on improving the performance of children who have been identified as having particularly severe speech and language difficulties. Staff have also worked with the local authority's adult education service to provide guidance to parents on how they can support their children's learning at home. However, the plans for these projects do not focus enough on measuring the impact of the work done.
- There are strong links with parents. Before the children start in the Nursery, staff visit their homes to identify what additional help they need, so that this can be provided quickly. Bilingual staff make good use of their skills to liaise with parents who have limited English. The leader and her colleagues also provide workshops for parents on a number of topics, including how to support children's phonics development.
- The summer schools, run by an experienced teaching assistant, provide valuable support to the parents of children who enter Reception without having attended a nursery.

- The quality of teaching in the early years is good. The children respond well to the clear routines which staff have established for them. They enjoy the tasks they are given and even the youngest have good levels of concentration. The staff use their time efficiently and they all have a clear understanding of their own and each other's roles.
- The environment in the classroom and outside is well organised and pupils can move easily from one to the other. The Nursery provision has a large, spacious outdoor area. The one for Year 1 is small but includes all the necessary equipment. Both areas have a calm, working atmosphere.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. The setting is well managed and supervised. The site is secure. All staff have undertaken appropriate safeguarding and paediatric first aid training.

School details

Unique reference number	119603
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10032282

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	475
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Peter Nunn
Associate Headteacher	Brendan Hassett
Telephone number	01772 794482
Website	www.st-matthew-ce.lancsngfl.ac.uk/
Email address	head@st-matthewscofe.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about attendance at governors' meetings and the PE and sport funding.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is also higher than 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.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed learning in classes. This included joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their work.
- The lead inspector talked to parents as they brought their children to school. He also examined the six responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View.
- The inspectors spoke to teachers and other staff in lessons and around the school and the lead inspector examined 15 responses to the online questionnaire for staff.
- The lead inspector met the chair of the governing body and four other governors. He also spoke to two representatives of the local authority and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the Diocese of Blackburn.
- The lead inspector had a discussion with eight pupils, chosen at random from Year 3 to Year 6.
- The inspectors also spoke to pupils in lessons, in the corridors and on the playground.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan.
- The inspectors also scrutinised documents relating to standards, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Aelwyn Pugh, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
Howard Bousfield	Ofsted Inspector
Nusret Ellahi	Ofsted Inspector
Kathleen McArthur	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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