

St John's Catholic Primary School, Poulton-le-Fylde

Breck Road, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire, FY6 7HT

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to an excellent start. They quickly become enthusiastic, confident learners and make rapid progress in all areas of learning.
- The school builds extremely well on this excellent start and pupils continue to make outstanding progress as they move through the school. They achieve standards which are well above average by the time they leave Year 6.
- Teaching is of a consistently high quality because teachers have very high expectations of all pupils. They know pupils exceptionally well and set them challenging work which is adapted to meet the needs and interests of different pupils.
- Pupils are encouraged from an early stage to develop their thinking skills and become independent in their learning. The quality of marking, however, is not consistent across all subjects and classes in the school.
- Extremely skilled and experienced teaching assistants make an exceptionally strong contribution to pupils' progress. They understand individual pupils' needs and support them highly effectively.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school are outstanding. They are polite and considerate at all times and relish opportunities to take responsibility and look after one another. They feel very safe and well cared for.
- Pupils thrive personally as well as academically because of the outstanding range of deeply engaging experiences provided by the school, which help them learn about the world around them and develop individual talents.
- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher and other senior leaders has ensured that previous high levels of achievement have been sustained. Leaders observe lessons regularly and give teachers detailed feedback to ensure that teaching remains outstanding.
- Governors are knowledgeable and very supportive of the school. There is no hint of complacency and all staff and governors are equally committed to giving all pupils the best possible opportunities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 19 lessons, including an observation of a small support group. Inspectors listened to pupils reading and observed the teaching of early reading skills. They also looked at examples of pupils' work to obtain a view of teaching and progress over time.
- Discussions took place with pupils, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, a representative from the local authority, senior leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors took account of 52 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the school's analysis of the most recent parental surveys carried out by the school, one letter from a parent and one telephone call, and 13 staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including data on pupils' progress across the school, the school's view of its own effectiveness and its development planning, records of the quality of teaching and learning, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documentation in relation to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Christine Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila Loughlin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority. Traditionally, only a tiny proportion of pupils in each class are eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Taylor's Tigers provides a breakfast and after-school club, managed by an external provider. These are subject to separate inspections and the reports are available on the Ofsted website.
- The headteacher works as an associate adviser for the local authority on two days each week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching even further, by ensuring that teachers' marking in all classes and subjects shows pupils exactly how to improve their work and that they have time in lessons to respond to the advice given.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly typical for their age. An exciting range of activities captures their interest and they are very inquisitive and eager to learn. They make rapid gains in all areas of learning and are extremely well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils continue to make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Their attainment at the end of both key stages is well above average. The proportion of pupils who reach levels which are higher than those expected for their age is above national averages. High proportions of pupils make better than expected progress.
- The small number of pupils supported by pupil premium funding make very good progress, and some make exceptional progress. The extremely well-planned support that these pupils receive and the positive impact that this has on individual pupils' achievement is evidence of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. The proportion of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 who are eligible for free school meals is so small that comparisons in their attainment in English and mathematics with that of other pupils are not statistically valid.
- As a result of flexible and precisely targeted support which meets their needs extremely well, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress from their individual starting points.
- Early reading skills are taught very effectively. The youngest children love learning songs and playing team games which help them learn about the links between sounds and letters. Current data indicates that most pupils in Year 1 have reached the expected standard in reading words. Pupils quickly develop a real love of reading and are keen to discuss their favourite authors. Older pupils understand how important reading is as a life skill.
- Pupils' work shows that they are making consistently very good progress and achieve high standards in all subjects. They apply their skills in English and mathematics widely across the curriculum. Pupils become confident and articulate speakers through opportunities to take part in debates and give talks and presentations.
- Pupils confidently use information and communication technology to support their learning and for independent research. Groups of pupils in Year 6 worked together to create short film sequences using tablet technology whilst others designed story boards on the 'interactive table'.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The quality of teaching over time is outstanding and has resulted in pupils' rapid progress and high standards. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils, they praise and encourage them and they expect all pupils to give of their best. They plan work that relates directly to pupils' interests and experiences. Year 1 pupils were keen to help Mr Grinling from *The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch*, think of ways to stop the seagulls eating his dinner and to write down their suggestions.
- Pupils are actively involved in learning during their lessons and lessons move at a brisk pace. Tasks and activities are very closely matched to pupils' abilities and pupils are very clear about what they are expected to learn. Year 2 pupils knew exactly what aspects of their writing they were trying to improve as they wrote stories to read to children in the Reception class. During lessons, teachers refer to 'working walls' and provide prompts and examples to help pupils develop their skills further. Pupils of all ages are involved in assessing how well they are doing.
- Teachers ask searching questions which check pupils' understanding at different stages of the lesson and enable them to correct misconceptions. They also ask questions and set challenges which give pupils plenty of opportunities to work things out for themselves. Pupils in Year 6 investigated different mathematical problems and puzzles and developed a greater understanding of how to approach tasks systematically. Pupils know that teachers will always value what they do and this gives them the confidence to try out their ideas.

- Highly-skilled teaching assistants have a very good understanding of different pupils' needs and how to help them make good progress. They reinforce skills that pupils are finding difficult through specially planned work, they teach specific topics, and they extend pupils' understanding through investigations or imaginative activities such as role play.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and praise their efforts and achievements. However, teachers do not consistently provide pupils with clear written comments on what they need to do to improve. Where teachers do give this helpful guidance, they do not always give pupils enough time to act on the advice given. This means that chances are sometimes missed to move learning forward even further.
- Pupils take pride in their work. The 'learning logs' where they complete homework challenges give them opportunities to work independently and present their work in imaginative ways. They were keen to show how they have used photographs, paper flaps and moving parts to present work on topics as diverse as the Great Wall of China and fairgrounds.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are polite and considerate and behave extremely well around school. Their excellent attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to their outstanding achievement. Pupils know that they are respected and valued as individuals and, in return, respect and value others. They care a lot about one another and older pupils love the opportunity to be 'twinned' with pupils in the Reception class. On the rare occasions when pupils 'fall out', they say that they can sort things out for themselves because 'they've taught us through the years how to make friends and forgive each other.'
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the different responsibilities they are able to take on in different year groups and are proud of their contribution to school life. For example, Year 5 'playground pals' help younger children play together sensibly and fully trained Year 4 pupils serve salad at lunchtime and encourage others to eat healthily.
- Pupils also have a clear understanding of their responsibilities within the wider community. They are proud of the support they give to a charity providing school meals for children in Africa and talk knowledgeably about environmental issues and how they can help through recycling batteries and other waste.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and that adults look after them very well. They are aware of the different kinds of bullying and report that incidents are extremely rare. If they have any worries they know that they can talk to adults and things will get sorted out quickly. Parents agree that their children are kept very safe in school.
- The school places a high priority on good attendance which is consistently above the national average.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides strong leadership. They share an ambitious vision for the school which is demonstrated through the whole-school belief that every pupil and teacher will perform to the highest standards. Leadership is successfully shared across different levels and all staff are committed to the drive for continuous improvement. They work together enthusiastically and highly effectively to ensure that outstanding achievement and teaching are sustained.
- Leaders are accurate and honest in their judgements about the school and have a clear focus on ensuring that all pupils make rapid progress throughout the school. The school's systems for checking pupils' progress are highly effective and leaders know precisely how well individual pupils are doing. They quickly identify pupils who may be at risk of falling behind in their learning and put in place high-quality additional support. They also ensure that pupils' individual skills and talents are nurtured and developed through specific activities and challenges.
- There are very good systems and procedures in place to check the quality of teaching on a

regular basis. Detailed feedback to teachers, training opportunities and the chance to share the best practice ensure that teaching continues to improve. Teachers are held accountable for the progress their pupils make and arrangements for deciding on any increases in salaries are firmly based on the effectiveness of their teaching.

- The well-planned curriculum brings subjects together into topics that engage pupils' interests very successfully. Frequent opportunities are provided to enable pupils to practise and develop literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects and in meaningful contexts, which contribute well to their excellent achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils find learning memorable and exciting through a range of engaging experiences. Visitors such as the 'bug man' are a regular part of school life. Pupils develop an understanding of what life is like in less well-developed countries through fetching and carrying buckets of water. Strong links with the church and local community, together with many opportunities to discuss and reflect on their feelings and experiences, all contribute highly effectively to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There are excellent relationships with parents, the overwhelming majority of whom are extremely supportive of the school. They appreciate how welcome they are made to feel and how well their children are looked after and prepared for the future.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' support for this outstanding school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors provide strong support and ask challenging questions to ensure the school's continuing success. Through first-hand experience of the school and reports from the headteacher and other leaders, they make sure that all pupils achieve as well as they should and that the quality of the school's work is of a consistently high standard, including the quality of teaching. They have a clear understanding of the connection between the effectiveness of teachers' work and the arrangements for pay progression. They have allocated the pupil premium funding extremely well and carefully monitor its impact on eligible pupils. They are fully committed to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination of any kind. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements fully meet statutory requirements.

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	119631
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	412447

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Hartley
Headteacher	Brigid Gildert
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2007
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