

Robins Lane Community Primary School

Robins Lane, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 3NF

Inspection dates

11–12 July 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	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of education at the school has dropped since the previous inspection. Current leaders have not fully stemmed the decline in pupils' achievement. They do not make enough checks on the quality of pupils' work.
- Targets for improving the work of the school are not precise enough to help leaders and governors check that their actions are resulting in improvement.
- The role of middle leaders is at an early stage of development. Too much of the drive for improvement rests with senior leaders.
- Too few of the most able pupils are mastering the skills and knowledge they need.
- Some pupils' understanding of different faiths, religions and different types of family is patchy.
- Pupils' learning in history and geography is not as strong as it should be.
- The school website does not meet requirements.
- Some pupils do not have good attendance and their learning is affected.
- The quality of teaching is variable across the school. Pupils are not always challenged and supported well and this holds back their progress and attainment. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils varies across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders know the school well. They are starting to take the steps necessary to improve the school and once again give pupils a successful start to their education. The quality of staff's work is beginning to improve. Leaders have maintained high staff morale in a year of huge change and upheaval.
- Teaching and assessment are improving. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive.
- Teaching assistants play a significant role in helping pupils learn.
- The work of the Nursery and Reception classes is good and improving. Leadership is strong. Children progress well. They learn much from well-planned teaching, including outdoors.
- Children in the early years and pupils in Year 6 are increasingly becoming skilful writers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress.
- Leaders and staff are learning well from the advice and insights of education colleagues from outside the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and the impact on pupils' outcomes by:
 - making sure that learning for all pupils is challenging and interesting enough, including in geography and history lessons
 - deepening and extending the thinking and understanding of the most able pupils across all subjects from the early years to Year 6
 - making more provision to help pupils complete work if they miss any lessons
 - sharpening the focus on meeting the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - increasing the attendance of each pupil who does not have full attendance at school
 - making sure that pupils learn well about different faiths, religions and types of family.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders on pupils' outcomes by:
 - developing the skills, knowledge and roles of middle leaders in checking and evaluating the work of staff and giving colleagues more support for improving their teaching
 - improving the checks made by leaders on the quality of pupils' work in books, particularly in the foundation subjects
 - improving the precision of targets in school plans so that leaders, staff and governors are clear how success will be measured.
- Make sure that information on the school website is sufficiently detailed about the curriculum in every subject and year group.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- In spite of previous success, leaders did not move the school forward enough over the years since the last inspection. This showed in the dip in standards in 2016, as staff worked with the new national curriculum and assessment arrangements. New senior leaders, working closely with the local authority, have since started to turn the school around. However, the quality of education provided for pupils has not improved enough.
- Priorities for improvement agreed by leaders and governors address the key issues facing the school. However, the criteria by which success will be measured are not precise enough to enable leaders and governors to judge the impact of their actions. Leaders now check the work of staff more closely but they do not review the quality of pupils' work across all subjects.
- Arrangements to develop the curriculum in the school are improving steadily. For example, leaders have worked extensively with staff to consider how to shift teaching away from the simple copying of commercial lesson materials to focusing much more on the needs and interests of pupils at Robins Lane. Reviews of the curriculum have enabled leaders to identify where better planning is required. This work is beginning to improve pupils' progress, but leaders recognise that there is more to do. For example, pupils say that there are not enough extra-curricular activities accessible to all.
- Leaders make sure that appropriate priorities for using the pupil premium funding are in place. While disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, their attainment still lags behind that of other pupils nationally.
- The role of middle leaders in school improvement is underdeveloped. This is affecting the quality of the school's work in a range of subjects, including geography and history. Nevertheless, science leaders in the school are benefiting from recent training, and in mathematics a clear action plan is in place to raise the quality of pupils' learning.
- The special educational needs coordinator has a good overview of the work of the school except for tracking the impact of funding. Nevertheless, extra funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well, particularly to employ additional teaching-assistant support.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and where further attention is required. They make good use of information about pupils' attainment and progress when reviewing the school. They make sure that staff's assessments of pupils are reliable through links with other schools and with the local authority. Leaders are increasing the opportunities for staff training to assist with the process of improvement.
- Physical education and sports premium funding is spent successfully. Pupils enjoy the activities on offer, participation is good and they want even more to be offered.
- From 2016, the acting headteacher moved quickly to begin improving the school. She has faced several significant challenges and issues for which the local authority has given much helpful challenge and support. Staff strongly support the changes introduced and the new direction set for the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors have dealt well with a range of complex issues affecting the school this year. They know that pupils' attainment and progress are not good. They challenge leaders thoughtfully about improvement because they are ambitious to see the school once again excel. They take on advice willingly about how they can improve their own work.
- Arrangements to keep an eye on issues such as school finance are appropriate.
- Governors visit the school regularly and talk to pupils and staff. For example, they check whether staff understand safeguarding issues. Nevertheless, governors do not make sure that the school website meets requirements on the publication of information.
- Sadly, the chair of governors passed away this year. Subsequently, the governors pulled together and linked well with the local authority and the new acting chair. They have recently completed the process of appointing the new headteacher. They are ready to work with him to assist the school in moving forward from September 2017.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The oversight of safeguarding in the school is shared across a number of leaders. This means that advice and support are readily available for staff and a close eye maintained on any concerns about pupils and/or their families. Leaders follow up any concerns with other agencies as necessary. Records of safeguarding are maintained clearly and securely. Staff and leaders have adequate training in keeping pupils safe. Clear messages are shared with parents, for example through the school website, about child protection. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are thorough. Careful records are kept of recruitment.
- During the inspection, inspectors identified that the school's current child-protection policy did not meet requirements. Leaders addressed the issue immediately by updating the policy. The wider safeguarding practices and procedures in place show that this issue does not indicate wider weaknesses.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching across the school lacks consistency. This leads to pupils making variable progress. Teaching in some classes this year has not improved quickly enough to help pupils catch up and make the progress needed.
- Over time, the most able pupils have not been given enough opportunities to deepen or extend their learning. This shows when pupils complete work quickly because it is unchallenging and spend too much time waiting for the teacher to tell them what to do next. The lack of challenge means that pupils find their work too easy and uninspiring.
- The quality of pupils' work in history and geography this year is variable. While planned teaching covers the requirements of the national curriculum, staff do not always plan

activities which engage pupils' interest.

- The teaching of English is improving. Teachers and teaching assistants now focus more attention in their planning on how to develop pupils' skills and knowledge in reading and writing. Activities are more interesting and thought-provoking as a result.
- The teaching of mathematics in some classes has improved this year. Nevertheless, the teaching of mathematics in upper key stage 2 has not been as successful and has held back the learning of some pupils.
- Positive relationships between staff and pupils underpin successful teaching throughout the school. Staff are beginning to work successfully as a team. They are starting to use questioning well to extend pupils' thinking. For example, in a key stage 1 activity, pupils were engaged in writing a diary entry about how a leopard got his spots. The teacher skilfully drew the pupils together to help them understand what was inaccurate about a sentence that she had just written on the easel. Her skilful questions helped pupils to think more carefully about what they were writing.
- School arrangements to assess pupils have been extensively and successfully revised this past year. Staff are starting to use information about pupils' learning with much more precision when deciding on the next steps for pupils.
- Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting pupils' learning across the school. Their subject knowledge has improved along with that of their teacher colleagues and is used carefully to prompt and question pupils. Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is enhanced by the skilled contribution of teaching assistants.
- Staff are making better use of opportunities in lessons for discussion. Pupils' vocabulary, their confidence in sharing their ideas with others and their spoken language are developing strongly. They are increasingly showing their knowledge and skills in their writing, particularly in English.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Pupils do not have a good understanding of different faiths and religions. Neither are they informed enough about the way in which families may be different.
- Pupils benefit from school activities about safety and online safety. They have an adequate understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Nevertheless, they told inspectors that there are not enough opportunities at school to learn about this aspect of life.
- Leaders and staff make their expectations clear that pupils must always respect one another. Bullying is rare in the school and pupils say that staff respond quickly and successfully if issues arise.
- Pupils enjoy learning about the important contribution of different people to the advancement of the modern world. For example, they have enjoyed learning about the contribution played by women in improving scientific knowledge.

- Pupils are smart and well dressed. They are proud of wearing their school uniform. Pupils respond positively to the increasing number of opportunities that staff give them to act responsibly. For example, some pupils volunteer to keep their school as a low user of energy and are active in recycling.
- Parents say that home-school communication is good and that staff are approachable. Pupils agree that they can speak to staff if they ever have any concerns about school issues or family matters. They told inspectors that teachers treat them with respect.
- Staff work successfully to build pupils' confidence and improve their attitudes to learning. Pupils know the importance of working hard but also of trying again when difficulties arise. They understand the value of teamwork and collaboration.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils do not attend school as much as they should. Over recent years, the attendance of girls, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been low. Following concerted actions by the school, attendance is improving steadily this year, but more remains to be achieved. The overall proportion of pupils who are absent or persistently absent is broadly similar to the national average.
- Pupils told inspectors that, over time, standards of behaviour have been variable in the school. For example, they said, 'We have school rules but they're not always followed.' Some girls told inspectors that they wish to see the school introduce better systems to manage girls' behaviour in the playground. Nevertheless, during the inspection, inspectors observed pupils behaving positively indoors and outdoors. The majority of parents are happy with standards of pupils' behaviour.
- In classrooms, pupils concentrate well. However, they are off task when teaching is not engaging.
- Pupils are polite, open doors willingly for one another and adults, and show good self-discipline.
- Classrooms and resources are organised carefully by staff. Pupils treat furniture, resources and displays with respect.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Traditionally high standards in Year 2 and Year 6 were not maintained in 2016. Information cannot be compared directly with that for past years because of changes to assessments and the higher expectations of the new national curriculum. Nevertheless, it is clear that pupils at Robins Lane did not achieve as well as they should. Pupils' progress in reading and writing in key stage 2 was weak, as was their attainment in reading and mathematics at key stage 1. Disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as much as they should across the school.
- The provisional figures for pupils' outcomes this summer indicate lingering weaknesses in the work of the school. For example, the proportion of pupils attaining expected standards in mathematics in Year 6 has dropped sharply from last year. This is because

the school has not given enough attention to making sure that pupils are learning well.

- Across the school, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not mastering their skills and abilities in the depth they need. The work completed by the most able pupils, particularly in geography and history, indicates that too few pupils are achieving high standards. No current pupils in Year 6 have attained a high standard in this summer's national assessments in mathematics. The proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching high standards in reading has declined from last year. In key stage 1, the provisional 2017 figures indicate that not enough pupils are attaining greater depth in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils currently in the school are making better progress, for example in mathematics and writing, in some year groups. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching mean that the picture is uneven between classes and subjects. Pupils' work shows that their progress is variable in history and geography.
- For some pupils, their level of absence adversely affects their progress. Teaching is not helping them enough to make up for lost ground.
- Funding for supporting disadvantaged pupils is increasingly targeted well, and pupils' progress is improving steadily. The close focus on their needs has helped some to catch up with their peers, particularly in Year 6. Nevertheless, not enough of this group of pupils attain as well as other pupils.
- From 2014 to 2016, pupils' ability to use phonics to read words by the end of Year 1 was consistently above average. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards dropped in 2017.
- There are improvements in some outcomes for pupils this year. For example, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining both the expected and high standards in their writing has improved. The proportion attaining expected standards in reading in Year 6 has also improved.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress. They make individually significant strides forward in their learning. Those disadvantaged pupils who also have special educational needs and/or disabilities are progressing strongly. This is because of the skilled support they receive from teaching assistants.

Early years provision

Good

- Through clear leadership and regular access to training, the work of staff in the early years is good and improving. Teaching is skilled and successful in helping children to be able, confident learners. Teamwork among staff is well established.
- From starting points below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language, children make good progress. The proportion of children gaining a good level of development is now in line with that found nationally. The skills and abilities of children in the early years are improving each year, and current Reception children are ready for the move to Year 1.
- Children love coming to school. Their relationships with one another and with staff are very positive. They are self-disciplined and look after their school well.

- Assessment is used carefully to guide teaching in each subject. The difference between the progress of disadvantaged children and that of other children is diminishing because of well-planned support, funded by the pupil premium.
- Staff plan and evaluate the curriculum carefully. Trips, such as to Manchester Airport, help to inspire children about the world around them. Children benefit from many worthwhile opportunities to play and learn outdoors and indoors. Writing activities are widespread and reflect staff's strong understanding of how to help children learn. Right from the start of Nursery, children's early attempts at writing are valued and encouraged.
- Staff teach mathematics well and children enjoy learning about this subject. For example, inspectors observed Reception children who loved tackling addition and subtraction problems by solving them in their heads. Leaders recognise that they need to do even more to stretch the abilities of the most able children.
- Parents say that staff settle children quickly and successfully and provide helpful information about children's learning.
- Staff have a good understanding of child protection and safeguarding.

School details

Unique reference number	104762
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10032794

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Acting chair	Nora Arnold
Acting headteacher	Jennifer Kilshaw
Executive headteacher	Barbara Flitcroft
Telephone number	01744 678503
Website	www.robinslane.co.uk
Email address	robinslane@sthelens.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 May 2007

Information about this school

- Robins Lane is an average-sized primary school.
- Most children are White British.
- The proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of children eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is above average.
- There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school offers a breakfast and after-school club.

- There are currently two classes in Year 1. In each of the other year groups, there is one class.
- Since the previous inspection, two headteachers have led and then moved on from the school.
- In September 2016, the deputy headteacher took on the role of acting headteacher. The local authority arranged for support from an executive headteacher from another school. Since November 2016, a different executive headteacher has supported Robins Lane. A new, permanent headteacher has been appointed and is joining the school from September 2017.
- Following the death of the chair of governors in March 2017, the local authority arranged for an experienced headteacher from another school to become the acting chair of governors.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the curriculum on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school and made joint observations with the executive headteacher and with the acting headteacher.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with leaders to consider their reviews of the school and their plans for improvement.
- Inspectors checked pupils' work in books, including with the executive headteacher and acting headteacher, to see what learning and progress have been like since September 2016.
- Inspectors considered responses from 30 staff to an Ofsted survey. Inspectors met a range of staff, including subject leaders, and they evaluated aspects of the schools' work.
- One of Her Majesty's Inspectors met with the senior assistant director for schools from St Helens local authority to discuss the support given to the school since summer 2016.
- Inspectors met with four members of the school governing body, including the acting chair.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in classrooms, corridors and outdoors. Inspectors spoke to a sample of 10 pupils from Years 2 to 6. They heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents as they dropped off their children at the start of the school day. Inspectors took account of 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 114 responses to a recent school survey of parents' views.
- Inspectors conducted a range of activities to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding at the school. These included a review of checks made by the school on suitability of staff to work with pupils; sampling school records about staff recruitment; a review of child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures; discussions with staff and with pupils and a check of school safeguarding files.
- Inspectors considered a range of information about the school, including school records of pupils' attainment and progress, attendance records and information published on the school website.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Nixon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Barbara Dutton	Ofsted Inspector
Jonathan Smart	Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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