

Lea St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119634
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379860
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Lead inspector	David Law

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gerard Oakes
Headteacher	Rachel Kilner
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Law

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector looked at teaching and learning in nine lessons and four teachers were seen teaching. These lesson observations added up to four hours and 15 minutes during which time opportunity was taken to talk to pupils in the class and look at work in their books. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, and staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at various documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan, child-protection policy and assessments of pupils' progress, while 62 parental questionnaires were received.

Information about the school

Lea St Mary's is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school. In some year groups pupil numbers are particularly small; there were three pupils in Year 6 in the last school year for example. The school takes pupils from the immediate village, but many travel in from further afield. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language and few from minority-ethnic groups. The school has a number of awards including Healthy School Status and Basic Skills Award. The school has met the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Happy pupils achieve well and thrive in their personal development. They display exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the school. The headteacher's clear vision and drive enthuses a highly committed staff team and teaching, leadership and achievement have all improved since the previous inspection. Parents and carers are highly supportive and value the positive ethos. The school is not outstanding because teaching is not outstanding and, although progress in writing is good, attainment is not as high as for reading and too few of the more-able pupils reach higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils make good progress in their learning throughout the school and reach above average attainment by the time they leave Year 6. Their progress in reading and mathematics is particularly brisk and pupils skilfully use their knowledge of letters and sounds and calculation strategies.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding because pupils show high levels of tolerance and respect and exceptionally enthusiastic attitudes to learning. Pupils feel entirely safe and instances of bullying are rare because the school has first-class systems to deal with any occurrence. Attendance is consistently above average.
- The good teaching is marked by high expectations, brisk pace and an ability to enthuse pupils. Lessons are planned well to meet pupils' needs. Outstanding teaching in Year 2 makes learning exciting and pupils respond with high levels of interest.
- Good leadership and management are based on accurate self-evaluation and a relentless focus on improving teaching through relevant training, the honest sharing of good practice and rigorous management of performance in the classroom. All teachers effectively lead an aspect of the school's work and the governing body, which is ambitious about raising achievement, fulfils its role well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in writing, particularly so that the more-able pupils attain the higher levels, by:
 - widening opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills across subjects of the curriculum
 - providing a more precise match of teaching to pupils' needs so that they are consistently challenged
 - sharing good practice about the teaching strategies that work well in the most successful lessons.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most children start the Reception Year with knowledge and skills that are in line with those expected for their age although in language a substantial minority are below. Good progress is made in the Early Years Foundation Stage and most enter Year 1 with attainment at or above average. Achievement continues to be good as pupils move through the school. Classrooms buzz with a love of learning and pupils' exceptionally positive attitudes. They concentrate well, work in harmony and are tenacious learners, for example, when solving mathematical problems. In lessons, teaching provides high expectations about following instructions closely and getting on with learning so, consequently, pupils' ability to focus generates a quiet and purposeful atmosphere. Together with excellent behaviour this engenders brisk learning. Pupils say how much they enjoy practical tasks and a group in Year 6 spoke proudly about winning a regional young-engineer competition with a vehicle they designed and built.

Pupils show a good grasp of the reading strategies they are taught and keenly apply their skills. They can clearly explain the meaning of what they read. By the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school, attainment in reading is above average and for many it is well above. Progress in writing is good overall but not as brisk as in either reading or mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2 for the more-able pupils where too few reach higher levels. There are strengths in writing in Year 2 where pupils present good handwriting and spell and punctuate well but this is not consistently built on in the next key stage. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because learning is well matched to their needs and they are supported by experienced teaching assistants. The school has a high proportion of boys but there are no differences between their performance and that of girls. All parents and carers agree that their children make good progress. A typical comment is how well different needs are catered for within a warm, friendly atmosphere. Attainment in the Year 6 national tests is above average in English and mathematics and has risen since the previous inspection. Scrutiny of work and the school's tracking data, together with lesson observations, confirm that current pupils are continuing this trend.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good and enables pupils to learn well and make good progress. Teachers have constructed a good quality curriculum which they use to plan relevant and interesting lessons. Classrooms are well organised to promote lively learning and involve pupils in

practical activities. Reception and Year 1 were enthralled doing subtraction sums with real cup cakes. Lessons are broken into short sections to sustain interest and facilitate group and individual work. Teachers manage behaviour well and make their high expectations explicit. Pupils say how much teachers make lessons interesting. They respond with outstanding behaviour and by taking responsibility, for example, quickly organising themselves into groups when asked to do so. Consequently, learning proceeds smoothly. The marking of pupils' work is thorough and focuses on key learning outcomes to help pupils to improve. Pupils confidently relate their personal targets and say how much marking helps them. Assessment is accurate and used well to plan relevant next steps so learning is usually matched well to pupils' needs. However, the more-able pupils are not always challenged enough in their writing, particularly at Key Stage 2, and this inhibits progress while, similarly, there is not enough opportunity for pupils to apply their writing skills across the curriculum. The assessment of disabled pupils and those with special needs, undertaken by the school coordinator, is exceptional and results in well-targeted teaching for those who need it. Teaching in Year 2 is outstanding with vitality, exceptional organisation and a brisk pace that engenders an equally brisk rate of learning. For example, pupils learning about Florence Nightingale, intently followed a presentation on the interactive whiteboard, were engrossed in looking at history artefacts and their level of curiosity led them to reflect carefully and devise questions to follow up. All teachers provide opportunity for pupils to reflect, become curious and work with others. This is effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents and carers feel their children are well taught and value the approachability of teaching staff should there be a need to discuss their child's learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety is outstanding and the school has a warm, positive climate where pupils thrive and achieve a sense of belonging to a community. Pupils say confidently that they feel very safe in school. They show a well developed awareness of how to keep themselves safe, as for example when using the internet. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace because of pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour. Pupils are eager to come to school and attendance is above average. Their ability to cooperate, make a sustained effort to learn well and consider the needs of others strongly underpins their good achievement. Pupils are highly adept at taking responsibility for their own actions and around the school conduct themselves in an exemplary manner whether being directly supervised or not. They explain clearly why there are straightforward school rules and work with adults to shape them. Behaviour management approaches are applied with consistency, and well tailored support for the few pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour is extremely effective. There have been no exclusions for some considerable time. Pupils say they feel free from bullying in any form and are entirely confident that they can raise any personal concerns with adults and that these will be dealt with quickly and sensitively. Any rare instance of bullying is countered by highly effective policies and procedures, including the involvement of parents or carers. Scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions show that outstanding behaviour is a consistent feature of the school over time. During the Lenten Breakfast many parents, carers and friends of the school commented on the excellent behaviour of pupils across various situations including school visits and attendance at church. Parents and carers express strong confidence in the school's ability to promote good behaviour. The excellence of behaviour and safety makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, in enabling a keen sense of right and wrong and tolerance towards others.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good because there is a sustained and successful drive to raise achievement and improve teaching. The headteacher's sense of purpose and high level of commitment, and the effective support she receives from the senior teacher and office manager, has made a major contribution to continued improvement. The impact of this is seen in the strong rise in mathematics attainment since the previous inspection, for example. Teaching is now good whereas at the previous inspection it was satisfactory. Similarly, leadership, including governance, has improved from satisfactory to good. Improvements have been made because leaders and managers display the ambition and tenacity to sharpen performance in the classroom. There is considerable training for staff and productive links are established with other schools for teachers to share good practice. In addition, excellent teaching within the school is used as a model to improve classroom practice but there is scope to extend this. Teachers keenly take responsibility, show good leadership skills and have a drive for continual improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and succinct so that action is taken on important priorities with a sense of urgency. Plans for improvement are clear, focused on outcomes for pupils and monitored against measurable targets which hold people to account for their work. For example, the governing body, which knows the school well, can demonstrate that performance objectives for the headteacher are matched to the improvement plan. Underperformance is tackled robustly by school leaders and governors. For example, the school is aware writing needs to improve so this is a key priority in the development plan. The clear gains made since the previous inspection show that the school has a strong capacity to sustain improvement.

All leaders and managers have worked well together to provide a good quality, broad and balanced curriculum that meets pupils' needs, for example through a rich range of provision for sport, music, art and dance. The curriculum effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with the spiritual element being particularly strong as seen, for example, in pupils' independent use of quiet areas for reflection and prayer. Leaders and managers at all levels, and the governing body, are tenacious in promoting equality and tackling discrimination. Arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective, for example, child-protection procedures are exemplary.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lea St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Preston, PR4 0RJ

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you gave me and for contributing so well to the inspection. I enjoyed my visit very much and think that Lea St Mary's is a good school.

Your behaviour is outstanding and you work and play exceptionally well with each other. Your enjoyment of learning helps you to make good progress. You are especially good at reading but you very much like other subjects. I was delighted to see, for example, how well Year 2 pupils learnt about Florence Nightingale in their history lesson although, like them, I am still puzzled about how the bandage roller works! Congratulations also to the young engineers for the superbly designed and built vehicle that made you competition winners. Adults in school take very good care of you and this is why you feel really safe when you are there. Teaching is good and lessons are made interesting for you. The headteacher, school leaders and managers and the governing body are doing a good job and work well together to make learning interesting so you achieve well.

I have asked the school's leaders to help you learn even better by raising achievement in writing so more of you reach the higher levels.

You can help by telling your teachers how well you are doing and by continuing to show excellent attitudes and behaviour. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Law
Lead inspector

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