

St Mary Magdalen Catholic Junior School

Linacre Road, London, NW2 5BB

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Standards in mathematics are too low.
- The teaching is not consistently good to ensure pupils achieve well.
- Teachers do not use assessment well enough to plan and adapt lessons, or ensure that pupils have opportunities to share and discuss their work.
- Marking is not linked to pupils' targets for improvement and there are too few opportunities for pupils to respond to the teacher's comments and correct mistakes.
- The monitoring of the priorities in the school development plan by leaders, including governors, is not linked closely enough to improvements in teaching and pupils' progress.
- Parents and carers do not receive sufficient information about their children's progress and how they can help them to improve their work.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, including the governing body, have quickly put in place robust systems for managing the performance of teachers, linked to targets and training. As a result, teachers are developing as a professional team determined to raise standards.
- The range of curriculum activities contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour and good attitudes to learning ensure the school is a safe and welcoming place in which to learn.
- Reading is taught well and, as a result, pupils enjoy reading a wide range of texts.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes, visiting 19 part lessons and observing all teachers.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and other leaders and managers, members of the governing body, an officer from the local authority, the diocesan adviser and with pupils.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body, safeguarding arrangements and work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day, as well as those of the 37 parents and carers who contributed to the on-line Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Jennifer Barker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

George Logan

Additional Inspector

Kewal Goel

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school, with three forms of entry.
- The headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body have changed since September 2011.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding, which provides additional resources for looked after children, pupils eligible for free school meals and children from service families, is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average, but is above average for those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more pupils make good progress by:
 - making better use of assessment to plan lessons so that tasks and activities support and challenge pupils at all levels more effectively
 - widening the opportunities for pupils to share and evaluate their own and others' work in lessons
 - strengthening teachers' marking so that it is linked to pupils' own targets and next steps and providing time for pupils to respond to teachers' suggestions for improvement and make corrections
 - ensuring teachers have more opportunities to share and develop good practice across the school
 - sharing pupils' targets with parents and carers more regularly so that they are clear about what their children need to do to make good progress.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by:
 - developing regular opportunities for pupils to practise their knowledge of number facts, such as multiplication tables so that it supports their calculation skills
 - ensuring pupils have a range of practical resources in lessons to support their learning
 - planning opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to apply their skills to practical activities.
- Ensure leaders and managers, including governors, monitor the school's priorities more effectively, by:
 - setting clear timescales for review
 - involving more staff in the monitoring process
 - checking more closely their impact in improving teaching and in raising pupils' achievement
 - ensuring that governors' visits have a sharper focus on these priorities and the effectiveness of the school's actions.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement as there is not enough good teaching to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress from year to year and in different subjects. Although older pupils make better progress, it is not yet good enough to raise standards further, particularly in mathematics.
- Standards in English have been sustained at the national averages for the last three years, but those in mathematics were below average in 2012.
- Pupils do not do as well in mathematics as in English because there are insufficient planned opportunities to use practical resources for those who find mathematics difficult and to challenge all pupils through using their mathematics skills in other subjects. However, the whole-school focus on mathematics, supported by a consistent approach to developing pupils' numeracy skills and high quality training for all teachers, is beginning to have a positive impact of raising standards.
- A strong emphasis on developing reading in specific lessons and across a range of subjects ensures pupils develop effective skills and enjoy reading books by a range of authors. Some younger pupils, who are at the early stages of reading, find it hard to break down familiar and unfamiliar words using their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics). Although pupils in Year 3 receive some structured support, the assessments of their reading skills do not identify the gaps in their knowledge well enough.
- Writing is linked to a study of model texts and, as a result, pupils' progress in writing, particularly in the upper part of the school, is improving.
- Additional funding through the pupil premium for specific pupils is used well to enrich pupils' experience, for instance through instrumental lessons, educational visits and after-school clubs. Additional teaching and support staff and the school's focus on raising achievement in mathematics are ensuring that gaps in performance are narrowing. The majority of these pupils make the progress expected nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive good support in class. Well-targeted interventions ensure they make the expected progress from their starting points.
- Expectations of pupils who speak English as an additional language are high, particularly those who are at an early stage of learning English. Teaching support and additional sessions are used effectively to develop good understanding through a variety of speaking and listening activities, which lead to the development of their reading and writing skills. Consequently, these pupils make good progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is too variable across classes and subjects and not enough of it is good enough to ensure that pupils make rapid progress and achieve well. Although teaching has improved in the last year, it is not at a fast enough rate to accelerate pupils' progress consistently.
- Too often, the pace of lessons is slow as teachers spend too long talking to the class, with the result that pupils do not undertake their learning tasks and activities quickly enough.
- Teachers' planning does not take enough account of the individual needs of pupils in the class, which affects the progress they make. Some tasks and activities are too hard for some and too easy for others.
- Teachers do not give sufficient opportunities for pupils to share and evaluate their own and each other's work. This means that pupils do not learn from each other or develop the skills of working collaboratively.
- Marking is regular and the teachers' comments are positive, often including suggestions for

improvement. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to respond to the teachers' suggestions and to correct their mistakes, for instance in spelling, or to practise the skills that are linked to their own targets and improve their work. Sometimes, pupils use a colour-coded approach to marking their own and others' work, which is effective and improves their writing.

- In the best lessons, teachers question pupils well and ensure pupils ask questions in order to find out more themselves. This was evident in a history lesson, for instance, when pupils looked at a range of Victorian artefacts and compared them with modern day equivalents, such as chalkboards and small whiteboards.
- Teachers generally deploy support staff well in lessons and, as a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress in line with their peers. This is particularly so in lessons where additional resources, such as small whiteboards and pictures to support the development of subject-specific vocabulary, are also used to help these pupils.
- A range of opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy skills across the curriculum is developing well. For instance, in information and communication technology lessons, pupils used pictures from a book to write poetic text linked to music. This resulted in some very moving experiences, which were shared with the rest of the class.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoying coming to school and there are good relationships between pupils and adults. They are courteous and well mannered, and movement around the school is calm and orderly. Parents and carers say their children are happy to come to school and that behaviour is good.
- Pupils behave well. Their involvement with the governing body in developing the behaviour policy and a charter for the playground ensures they have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities in their behaviour towards each other. This has been effective in improving behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- School records show that incidents of poor behaviour are followed up and dealt with thoroughly. Pupils with challenging behaviour receive good support and the effective links with families and outside agencies result in good improvements in their behaviour.
- Attendance is average. The school uses a range of strategies to improve attendance, including additional enrichment opportunities to motivate pupils to want to come to school.
- Pupils, parents and carers agree that pupils are safe in school. The school develops pupils' awareness of how to keep themselves safe, for instance when using the internet and on the roads. They know about a range of bullying issues, such as racism and name calling, and are secure in the knowledge that adults will listen to them and follow up any concerns.
- Pupils have equal opportunities to participate in all activities and understand that discrimination is wrong. Relationships across the different cultures in the school are strong.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is driving improvements in teaching and raising expectations. They have restructured the management team and promotion through the salary spine is based on the quality of teaching, which is linked to pupils' achievement. Systems to address weaknesses in teaching are robust.
- Support through mentoring, coaching and sharing of best practice is developing an enthusiastic team of teachers keen to develop their skills, particularly in raising achievement in mathematics and writing. The impact of this strategy is evident in the better lessons and in pupils' improving work.
- Systematic and regular tracking of pupils' progress ensures underachievement is picked up quickly so that further action can be taken.
- Development planning is robust and focused well on key priorities. However, the monitoring and evaluation arrangements are not yet sharp enough. Not all middle leaders are sufficiently

involved in the review process, but their monitoring skills are improving. Timescales for reviews are unclear and there are too few opportunities for sharing practice across the school. As a result, the teaching and pupils' progress remain inconsistent across classes.

- Support from the local authority and other high-quality specialists is effective in guiding and improving the skills of leaders, managers and teachers. There are some positive links with other schools, including the main feeder school, with joint moderation of pupils' work and training for support staff.
- Staff engage well with parents and carers in the main and changes, such as an earlier start to the school day, have been implemented through discussion with them. However, some parents and carers feel that they do not have enough regular information about their children's progress or how they can provide them with effective support.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The strong cross-curricular links across subjects develop pupils' literacy skills well. For instance, in art and design, pupils used their different shoe designs to extend their vocabulary and research skills, and to write reflective accounts of the process.
- The curriculum, as well as the range of trips and other events, promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors ensure that procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully in place to meet requirements. They bring a range of skills to their work, which support the school well, particularly in relation to changes to the school's structure, performance management and teachers' progression through the pay scales. They have a sound understanding of the progress pupils make, as well as the school's performance in relation to all schools nationally. They monitor the use of additional funding for specific pupils and their progress, and are knowledgeable about the priorities in the school development plan. However, their visits to the school are not focused sharply enough on the key priorities in the school development plan. As a result, they do not provide robust challenge to senior leaders on the impact of teaching on improving pupils' achievement.

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

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| Unique reference number | 101542 |
| Local authority | Brent |
| Inspection number | 402856 |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 356 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Rachel Wilson |
| Headteacher | Maria Nowicka |
| Date of previous school inspection | 24 January 2008 |
| Telephone number | 020 8459 3159 |
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