

St John's Catholic Primary School

Chapel Lane, Lathom, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L40 7RA

Inspection dates

7 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school because:

- Pupils achieve well. Their progress is better than expected and standards in the national tests are above average by the end of Year 6.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have an advantageous start. They gain good skills in reading and writing, in their physical development and in their personal and social skills.
- Pupils with special educational needs get very good support. This enables them to be fully included in all aspects of school life. They proceed at a good rate towards their individual targets.
- Good, and at times outstanding, teaching provides lessons that are interesting and fun. Literacy and numeracy are taught well.
- Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes well to their good behaviour and safety.
- Good partnerships with parents make a positive difference to the pupils' progress. The support given at home, for example in reading and homework, enhances their children's quality of education.
- Caring, visionary leadership by the headteacher has brought about good improvement in recent years. Achievement has risen and teaching is better.
- A dedicated governing body works with the headteacher and senior leaders to gain an accurate view of the school. The school knows exactly where it is most effective and what it needs to develop.
- A strong emphasis is placed on keeping staff up to date. The headteacher enables individual staff to develop their expertise, for example, one teacher has achieved university master's level accreditation in special educational needs.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teachers marking and the guidance given to improve is variable.
- Although pupils' achievement has improved and is now good, this improvement has not yet been sustained over time.
- In mathematics, pupils are not skilled enough at solving problems or clear enough about their targets for improvement.
- The pupils' knowledge and understanding of people with cultures and lifestyles different to their own is underdeveloped.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed eight lessons.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, three governors, the staff team and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) that were submitted during the course of the inspection and referred to a recent governor's survey of the views of parents. Account was also taken of feedback from seven staff questionnaires.
- A range of school documentation was evaluated. These included the documents relating to safeguarding, the improvement plan, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance and records of pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection team

David Byrne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mary Liptrot

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is a Nursery on site which is not managed by the school but is incorporated into the school's accommodation. Its provision is inspected separately by Ofsted.
- During the inspection, one class was taught by a temporary teacher because of the maternity leave of the class teacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the focus on improving the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding, to sustain pupils' achievement over time by:
 - widening opportunities for pupils to apply their good basic numeracy skills to solve mathematical investigations and problems
 - giving pupils a better understanding about what they need to aim for to reach higher levels of attainment in mathematics
 - making sure that marking is consistent in the quality of its guidance and that the suggestions given for improvement to pupils are precise
 - enabling pupils to deepen their understanding of cultures and people different to themselves.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards have improved since the last inspection. This is because of strong leadership by the headteacher which has improved teaching, refined the use of assessment and adapted the curriculum. More time is now given to listening to pupils' views, which enables staff to have a greater awareness of how well pupils learn and progress.
- From starting points to the Reception that are generally just below typical for their age, children learn at a good rate. They do particularly well in their communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional well-being. Many gain a good understanding of letters and the sounds they make (phonics), which helps in their efforts to start reading and writing. Most children gain in confidence and are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- In Key Stage 1, standards have risen over the last two years. While attainment is now just above average, there are strengths in reading and writing. This is partly due to the positive impact of developing the pupils' knowledge of phonics and also due to good strategies to encourage reading. In mathematics, standards are broadly average.
- In Years 3 to 6, the pupils' rate of learning accelerates even further and is better than expectations for pupils nationally. In 2012, every pupil in Year 6 reached the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics and a higher than average proportion exceeded them. Accurate data held by the school indicates that the good progress is set to continue.
- Pupils across Key Stage 2 read with confidence and write well for lots of different purposes and in different subjects. Most spell and use grammar accurately. Some older pupils, who did not benefit from learning phonics when they were younger, are less confident in these areas.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of calculations. They use a variety of methods to solve mental calculations and are willing to grapple with varied questions and problems involving number. Pupils are not skilled enough in applying their good basic mathematical skills to solve problems and carry out investigations. This reduces the pupils' preparation for the next stage of their mathematical development.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive good support. Teaching assistants and teachers take care in planning the support required. As a result pupils make good progress towards their individual targets. The standards of such pupils in the school are generally higher than similar pupils nationally but they are usually below all pupils nationally.
- Very few pupils are eligible for the pupil premium; in some year groups there are none. Effective support within class by teachers and teaching assistants ensures that where funds are received, they are used to help the pupils to narrow any gaps in their performance compared to others.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. It is predominantly good with some outstanding elements. Lessons are generally well planned to capture the pupils' imaginations and to involve them in their learning. The use of information about how well pupils are learning has improved. It is now more wisely used to provide learning tasks that meet the differing abilities in each class.
- The quality of teaching varies slightly although learning and progress is good overall, and at times, it is excellent. The very best teaching promotes learning through highly practical approaches, for example, by investigating first-hand the chemical processes by designing and making a 'bath bomb' in science. Pupils report that they are keen on such practical approaches but say that in mathematics there is not enough of it.
- Staff value the opinions of pupils and listen to their views. Where possible, lessons are planned to accommodate their interests. This adds to the eagerness that pupils have for learning. The

use of educational visits is skilfully used to inspire learning, especially in writing and science. A recent visit, for example, to the 'Spaceport', a visitor attraction linked to space, gave pupils a hands-on journey 'through space and time'. This inspired good quality writing about aliens and other planets.

- Teachers keep a close eye on the performance of pupils in lessons and in their written work. They give pupils regular feedback about their work. While marking is regular, its quality varies in terms of guidance provided for pupils to improve. At times, comments are constructive and praise good work together with well-crafted areas for improvement. This is not consistently the case. At times, the suggested areas for improvement can lack enough specific pointers to help pupils move forward.
- Pupils know what they need to do to move their learning forward in writing but are less secure with such targets in mathematics. This means that, for some pupils, their ability to drive their own learning forward and develop an understanding of how well they are doing is restricted.
- Teachers are well trained and up-to-date with current educational approaches. They evaluate their own way of working and are open to new ideas, for example, by collaborating with teachers from other schools. Much thought is given to evaluating the best approach to homework which interests pupils and develops their ability to use research to support classwork.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents and pupils are strongly of the view that behaviour and safety are good. Inspection findings support this opinion with few incidents of misbehaviour over time noted by the school. Pupils respond positively to the systems for promoting good behaviour. They grow in stature when they receive a sticker for their behaviour and feel honoured when they qualify to sit at the 'top table'.
- Pupils say they feel safe but occasionally some, reportedly boys, tease and upset others. Staff respond swiftly to help pupils who are less secure and, as a result, bullying of any sort is rare. Mostly pupils are polite, caring to others and considerate with adults.
- There is a good awareness amongst pupils of safety. They are very alert to the risks of using the internet and talk maturely about how to keep safe in terms of strangers.
- Pupils are proud of the school and the education they receive. They proudly talk about their roles as school councillors and the way they contribute to decisions that have helped the school improve. Events, such as cake sales, raise funds for others less fortunate than themselves.
- Pupils are eager to learn and get on well in lessons. They have a natural curiosity for the world around them and this adds to their enjoyment of school. Their enthusiasm is reflected in consistently above-average attendance.
- While spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, pupils have a narrow understanding of cultures and people different to themselves in Britain and around the world.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a very clear vision and an astute understanding of the school and its community. Very effective steps are taken to make sure that all pupils are treated equally.
- Under the headteacher's leadership, supported by an effective deputy headteacher and strong governing body, the quality of education has improved since the last inspection. The morale of staff is high and their expertise has been strengthened. Subject leadership has improved and the provision for special educational needs is very well managed.
- A strong senior leadership team keeps a close check on the quality of teaching and the performance of pupils. Information that tracks pupils' attainment and progress is thoroughly evaluated to make sure that no pupil is underachieving.
- The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge feeds into a well-crafted school improvement plan and informs staff and the governors about what is needed

to move the school forward. The improvement in the school made by the current staff team indicates that it is well placed to continue to get even better.

- The professional needs of staff are carefully considered. As a result of regular discussions, training needs are identified and support put in place such as working with other schools.
- The school has made a number of changes to make the curriculum more relevant for pupils. Subjects are planned to ensure that pupils' knowledge and skills progress in their learning as they move through the school. Educational visits, including a residential stay with pupils from other schools, successfully widen the experiences provided except in terms of the range of cultures in modern society.
- Good partnerships with other schools extend the range of activities on offer. For example, the sports partnership enables some pupils to make their first steps in ballroom dancing.
- Parents are unanimous in saying they would recommend the school to others. This reflects the strong partnerships and high value given to their involvement in school life. Communication is of a good quality, for example, through the website, and parents are kept well informed of their child's progress.
- The local authority is a productive partner. Its guidance in the past has contributed to better teaching, and regular, objective reviews of how well the school is performing assists the school in forming its own judgements of its performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is dedicated and caring. It understands the school and checks on the accuracy of the information it receives about its performance. Governors support the school's approach to developing the skills of staff, which has successfully improved the quality of teaching. Governors willingly attend training themselves in order to keep up to date with new requirements. The effectiveness of spending is regularly reviewed to make sure that finances are wisely spent. It is well aware of the funds received for pupils eligible for pupil premium. The rationale behind the way it is spent is posted on the school's website. Care is taken to project the school's future income by doing its best to predict future numbers on roll. Governors make sure that all reasonable steps are taken to keep pupils and adults safe. All safeguarding procedures are in line with legal 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	119681
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	405877

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	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Forshaw
Headteacher	Elizabeth Devey
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2011
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