

Our Lady and St Swithin's Catholic Primary School

Parkstile Lane, Liverpool, Merseyside, L11 0BQ

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils do not always make consistently good progress, in mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2.
- Teaching is not consistently good. The teaching of mathematics for some is too easy and for others too hard. Not enough use is made of the teaching assistants to help re-shape the pupils' learning.
- Marking is not used effectively enough by all teachers. It sometimes lacks detail and more could be done to ensure that pupils learn from their mistakes.
- Some families do not do enough to make sure that pupils are brought to school regularly. Attendance is below average. The school has not yet addressed this situation firmly enough.
- Uncertain leadership has slowed down school improvement. Middle leaders have not been active enough in helping the headteacher evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the arrival of the new headteacher there has been an improvement in standards. Pupils of different abilities make similar progress.
- From low starting points, children make consistently good progress in the nursery and reception classes.
- Teaching and learning in many lessons is good and there is much good practice on which the school can build.
- Pupils read well by the time they leave school. The teaching of early reading skills is organised well.
- Pupils say they enjoy school. They are polite and considerate to one another.
- Governance at the school is good. They are aware of the school's strengths and challenge the school to do better. They are committed to securing further improvement in the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons. In addition, the inspection team made a number of shorter visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, a member of the governing body, a representative from the local education authority and members of the senior leadership team and teaching staff.
- There were 43 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to take into account in planning the inspection.
- The inspection team listened to pupils read, spoke to them about their learning and looked at work in their books. They looked at a number of documents, including the school's own tracking data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and those documents relating to attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Robert Pye, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

John Evans

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Our Lady and St. Swithin's Catholic Primary is an average-sized primary school, managed by the governing body. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding allocated for pupils in the care of the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals or whose family are in the armed forces) is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils whose learning needs are supported at a level known as school action is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection the local authority and archdiocese has brokered a series of interim headteachers. A substantive headteacher was in post from January 2011 – May 2012 and a substantive headteacher has been in post since October 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise standards, especially in mathematics at Key Stage 2, by :
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently good or better in all classes by raising teachers' expectations for all pupils
 - providing modified tasks or different levels of support, including that offered by teaching assistants for pupils of different ability so all are suitably challenged
 - checking that teachers' marking provides clear next steps and that pupils' have the opportunity to respond to teachers' feedback to produce better work in the future.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - improving the delegation of leadership roles and ensuring that rigorous monitoring of teaching, including by middle leaders, effectively raises the quality of teaching
 - ensuring that there is a strategic plan to raise attainment in mathematics, including the establishment of clear age-related expectations across different year groups
 - working with the local authority and parents to ensure that all unnecessary absence is eradicated.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children join the school with skills and abilities that are well below those expected for their age. They use their senses to explore the world around them in a well organised Early Years Foundation Stage setting: one group of children were highly focused as they pretended to walk through the jungle, singing and counting in response to an imaginary story about the animals that lived there.
- National assessments in Year 2 indicate that standards have declined consistently over a three-year period and in 2012 were below the national average. Overwhelming evidence gained during the inspection from looking at the school's own data, pupils' work and lesson observations shows that this decline has now been reversed and is improving rapidly as a result of consistently good teaching up to and including Year 2.
- There are effective arrangements for developing pupils' understanding of the link between letters and sounds which help them gain confidence with early reading and spelling. Pupils now make good progress in the infant classes.
- The school's records and evidence gained during the inspection from pupils' work and lesson observations show that progress is uneven between the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. Standards are similar to those found nationally and higher in reading and writing than they are for mathematics.
- Pupils read widely and often. A few have fluency and understanding with reading that is better than that expected nationally. In lessons they practise using 'correct spoken English'. Consequently they communicate well orally, making their feelings and opinions understood. In mathematics, however, the pace of learning is often dictated by the over-use of commercial schemes which are not sufficiently tailored to meet the needs of the pupils. As a result the pace of learning slows.
- Data from national tests show that those entitled to the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, are narrowing the attainment gaps in English and mathematics and do at least as well as other pupils throughout the school. The school identifies disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, and also those who are found to be underachieving, as in need of 'school action' by withdrawal from lessons. Data shows that these pupils are making as much progress as others.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- More than half the lessons observed were well taught. There was some outstanding practice. For instance, in a Year 3 French lesson pupils waved their hands in eagerness to contribute as they learnt the names of 12 different colours. The teacher's enthusiasm was infectious and the pace of learning rapid, because the teacher had excellent subject knowledge and involved all the pupils in the lesson. However across Key Stage 2, there is a need for improvement in some teaching and marking.
- Most lessons had good features, including positive relationships, ensuring that lessons ran smoothly. Reading is taught well. Teaching of the use of phonics (the letters and sounds they make) to help pupils read unfamiliar words is given high importance. Likewise older pupils learn well during guided reading sessions and are suitably challenged to read with greater understanding.
- In some Key Stage 2 classrooms, mathematics teaching relies too much on prescriptive commercial plans that do not promote pupils' understanding well enough. These plans are not sufficiently flexible to meet pupils' needs because they do not always set the correct level of challenge for pupils of different ability. Consequently, for some the work is too hard, while for others too easy.
- Where pupils have a chance to work alone or in groups, teachers and teaching assistants do not

always circulate in the room, checking understanding and re-shaping tasks. As a result the pace of learning slows because some pupils spend too long on concepts that they have already grasped.

- Recently the school has provided coaching for those who are falling behind, or who find it difficult to learn. This out-of-classroom support is largely provided by teaching assistants and the effective arrangements are enabling these pupils to make up for lost time. However, effective learning is not yet going on in all the classrooms.
- Some of the marking seen during the inspection was to a high standard. However, it is not consistent between classrooms and next steps are not always clear to the pupils. In addition, where teachers have identified aspects that a pupil needs to improve, there is a lack of effective follow up to ensure the pupil gets it right next time.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupil's attendance at school has remained below average for a long time. This has had a direct impact on their learning. In the recent past too many pupils have been taken out during term time to go on holiday. Some families are not always diligent in getting their children to school. This was clearly illustrated during the second day of the inspection. Local snowy conditions meant that one in three pupils did not attend school that day. In contrast, the Year 4 class, who were performing their brass band concert to parents, presented a nearly full attendance thereby showing that school was accessible.
- The majority of parents that responded to the Parent View questionnaire feel that the school provides a safe environment and that pupils enjoy school and behave well.
- By Year 6 pupils have developed generally good social skills and interact with each other and adults in a mature way. They are polite and courteous. Behaviour and attitude to learning in lessons is often good, particularly where lessons are interesting. In a minority of lessons, however, particularly when tasks were either too hard or too easy, some pupils became restless and did not apply themselves fully to their work.
- Pupils say they feel safe and that staff take good care of them. They say that name calling and other forms of bullying are rare and that should a minor fall out occur staff quickly sort it out. They have a reflective view of the wider risks found within the community and are cautious about where they go and how to take care of themselves.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a succession of interim and substantive headteachers, organised by the local authority and archdiocese. This uncertainty about leadership has impeded school improvement in the past. The school now has a substantive headteacher in place. The governing body has managed this turbulence in staffing well and helped to steer the school through a difficult time.
- The headteacher and her deputy share a clear vision. They have already put in place well-formulated plans that have resulted in immediate improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. They have recognised, for example, that some pupils are falling behind and so have made provision for extra support outside the classroom. This has been successful in recouping lost learning.
- The performance management of staff has been erratic since the previous inspection. Consequently, standards in teaching have remained the same in recent years. A robust system is now in place and there is good evidence to show that the quality of teaching has improved, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- The development of middle leaders also stalled throughout this period. They are not sufficiently involved in helping the headteacher evaluate the quality of pupils' learning and the quality of teaching and, as such their skills are not used to full effect to move the school forward. In particular, there has been no plan to establish clear, age-related expectations in mathematics in

order to more accurately measure learning and raise expectations.

- The headteacher has rightly identified below average pupil attendance as a barrier to learning. Robust procedures that directly involve the local authority have been applied to ensure higher attendance rates. It is too early to judge the impact of these procedures.
- There are a good range of learning opportunities, including 'bikeability', joining in with a dance festival and singing as part of 'Merseyside Unites'. The headteacher has made arrangements for specialised lunchtime clubs. Pupils and parents value the additional activities that are provided. They appreciate the equal opportunities that they all have, to find success and value the way the school looks after their personal development.
- Leaders ensure that child-protection and safeguarding arrangements meet all requirements.
- The school is very well supported by the local authority. It looks to the authority for ongoing support with the improvement of teaching and taking action with parents on attendance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well led by a committed and experienced Chair. Governors have received training on how to interpret data in order to understand more fully the schools' profile. As a result they have a clear understanding of the school and national data on pupils' performance. They keep a close check on the school's budget and ensure that pupil premium funding is used to good effect for the purposes intended. Governors are now well informed about the quality of teaching and hold the headteacher to account for the actions taken to improve it through the professional training of staff. They seek and obtain assurance that salary levels are closely linked to performance.

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	104632
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	400728

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	262
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Pederson
Headteacher	Clare Cooke
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2009
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