

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Back Lane, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L23 4UA

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- St Mary's is highly valued by pupils, their families, staff and the village community.
- During the inspection, pupils' behaviour in and around the school was exemplary and school records show that this is typical. Pupils feel happy, safe and secure.
- Pupils really value their school community, the staff and each other. They have an extremely positive attitude toward learning from an early age.
- Children get off to a good start with their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and continue to make good progress during their time in school.
- Pupils achieve well and the proportion of pupils making the expected rate of progress is higher than that found nationally.
- Reading is a priority and strength of the school as is the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. Teachers provide good guidance and advice to help pupils with ways to improve their learning.
- There are many interesting activities in lessons which the pupils enjoy. They particularly like learning outdoors in the local, rural environment which captures their imaginations and helps them to further develop their literacy and numeracy skills.
- This is an improving school where leaders and managers have successfully introduced changes to enhance further the quality of teaching. The new tracking system to check on the progress pupils are making is skilfully used by teachers to plan lessons and, when necessary, provide additional support.
- The dedicated governing body provides a good balance of support and challenge for the school. Together with senior leaders, they are focused on raising the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough teaching that is outstanding. Occasionally, activities in lessons do not provide the appropriate level of challenge for pupils of different abilities, particularly the more able.
- Teachers do not always adapt their lessons quickly enough to meet pupils' needs.
- Pupils are not always given time in lessons to improve their work and respond to teachers' marking.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five teachers and visited eight lessons. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, senior staff and subject leaders, parents, the acting Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance, its development plans, records of pupils' attainment and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work.
- The inspector took account of the 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's recent parent survey. The inspector also received a letter from a parent.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school with mixed-age classes except for the Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from services families and those children that are looked after.)
- The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage and all pupils speak English as their first language.
- Those known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is slightly more than the national average.
- The school holds Healthy School and Extended School status. The school offers breakfast and after-school clubs.
- A brand new sports hall has been built recently on the school grounds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding and thereby drive pupils' progress at an even faster rate, in English and mathematics, by:
 - making sure that work set for pupils of all abilities, and particularly the more able, allows them to make as much progress as possible
 - ensuring that teachers quickly adapt their lessons when pupils find the work too easy or too hard
 - providing time in lessons for pupils to respond to teachers' marking so that they can correct and edit their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children settle very well into the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of very effective transition arrangements between school, home and nurseries. They make good progress because of the clear focus on communication, language and calculation skills. The Reception-aged children benefit from the wide range of activities that they can use both in the classroom and outdoors.
- Most children join Reception class with skills that are in line with those typically expected for their age although this does vary from year to year. Children do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this continues in Years 1 and 2. They join Year 3 with attainment levels which are higher than those typical for their age, particularly in reading.
- Younger children learn effectively how to link letters and the sounds that they make (phonics). Phonics is effectively taught in small groups based on pupils' abilities. In the 2012 tests, almost every pupil achieved the expected level in reading in Year 1 and significantly more than the national average attained at the higher levels at the end of both key stages.
- Attainment in writing at the end of Years 2 and 6 is now above national levels because of increased opportunities across the curriculum to develop pupils' writing skills. There is a whole-school systematic approach to teaching mathematics ensuring pupils have secure mental mathematics skills to help with problem solving. Topic work has increased the opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy and literacy skills beyond mathematics and English lessons.
- The proportion of pupils making expected and better than expected progress in English and mathematics from their individual starting point is generally higher than that found nationally. This prepares them well for the next stage in their education.
- Most pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for pupil-premium funding and those who have special educational needs, make the same good progress because of timely and sharply focused help from teachers and teaching assistants. The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to other pupils in school. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and some teaching is outstanding.
- Where teaching is at its best, teachers and teaching assistants plan lessons very well together to ensure pupils are given work to get the best out of them. Consequently, pupils learn rapidly because they are given work which matches their ability and they are finding out things for themselves.
- An example of this was seen in a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson. The lesson began with rapid mental mathematics practice and then pupils were asked if they had any friends/relatives overseas and whether or not they knew the time differences compared to that in Britain. This made the lesson extremely relevant and interesting for the pupils and they proceeded to work out a range of challenging problems linked to time zones across the world. Pupils of all abilities were highly engaged and enjoying their learning which had been designed to stretch and challenge their mathematical skills alongside their geographical knowledge. With excellent teacher, teaching assistant and volunteer support, all pupils made outstanding progress.
- Similarly, in a Key Stage 1 science lesson, pupils learnt about force and gravity. There were lots of practical opportunities enjoyed by pupils and they were encouraged to experiment and find out things for themselves. Rapid progress was made in developing their scientific understanding while increasing their range of vocabulary as they talked knowledgeably about their results.
- Occasionally, the activities do not meet the needs of all ability ranges fully and this was seen in an English lesson when some found the work too easy and others, too hard. Teachers do not always adapt their teaching quickly enough when this is the case.

- Teachers insist on good presentation across all subjects and pupils take pride in their work. Marking is thorough and ensures pupils know how to improve their work. However, pupils are not consistently given enough time in lessons to correct and edit their work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants who support those with special educational needs and pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding are well trained to provide for the individual learning needs of each pupil. They always encourage pupils to do their best.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- When children join St Mary's, they learn from an early age how to value each other, the adults around them and their strong school community which several parents described as being 'absolutely fabulous' where 'nothing is too much trouble' for the staff. There is an exceptionally strong atmosphere of mutual respect starting in Reception and continuing throughout the school. This leads to pupils feeling happy, safe and secure. This is reflected in their above-average attendance and their punctuality in the mornings, which is very good indeed.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well both in lessons and around the school and this results in extremely good attitudes to learning and care towards each other. This was reflected in conversations with pupils and their families, and from all the views expressed on Parent View. All parents expressed their confidence in the school.
- Pupils feel safe and learn how to keep themselves safe including when they are online and all parents agree that their children are well cared for at school. Pupils' experiences are increased through a range of well-managed trips, before- and after-school activities and outdoor opportunities which make the most of the rural environment in which the school is based. A lesson for Years 3/4 illustrated clearly how pupils develop their knowledge of road safety and they had all completed their homework to find signs which warn of dangers which they animatedly discussed.
- Pupils say that bullying is not an issue at this school although they do learn about different types of bullying and, for example, how to stay safe when using the internet. They are adamant that they could turn to any adult in the school if they felt unsafe and that there are clear procedures that would deal with issues should they arise.
- Older pupils are excellent role models for the younger children and this was evident at all times throughout the school day.
- Sports coaches, authors and musicians are regular visitors to the school and enhance the opportunities during lessons and beyond.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have a good understanding of how to drive whole-school improvement. The school's systems to check pupils' progress are now strong. Leaders and managers check the quality of teaching and measure effectively how well staff are meeting their various areas of responsibility. All staff are well supported through training opportunities both within the school and beyond. Improvements to the quality of teaching are clearly evident.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements to the outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is now a good balance of teacher-led activities and opportunities for children to explore things for themselves both in the classroom and outdoors.
- The local authority effectively provides guidance for the school with 'light-touch' support.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils extremely well because it is developed specifically for St Mary's Primary School and utilises the whole of the school environment and community which the pupils really enjoy. The school has a sharp focus on literacy and numeracy development but is also extremely keen to provide additional experiences.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional and supports pupils to make an excellent contribution to the positive atmosphere in school. Pupils are aware of different religions

and cultures and this is made real for them with, for example, their link with other local schools and a school in France.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is committed to continually driving improvements at this school. Governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities; all staff have been vetted and trained appropriately to keep pupils safe. They have an accurate overview of overall provision. The governing body works closely with the senior leadership team. Governors challenge staff on pupils' progress and have a secure understanding of data. This level of enquiry and accountability contributes to shaping the short- and long-term plans for the school based on how well pupils are progressing compared to other schools. Governors are aware of the quality of teaching which is linked to teachers' salary progression based on meeting targets. They check that staff make effective use of pupil premium funding to ensure equality of opportunity and that all groups of pupils achieve well.

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	104927
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	412506

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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Acting Chair	J Kelly
Headteacher	P M Hennessy
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2006
Telephone number	0151 924 4447
Email address	admin.stmaryslittlecrosby@schools.sefton.gov.uk

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