

St Mary's The Mount Catholic Primary School

Jesson Road, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 3AY

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make excellent overall progress during their time at school, and their achievement has been outstanding for the last three years. Achievement and attainment are exceptional in mathematics.
- Teaching is often outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, have high expectations of pupils and through rigorous monitoring have detailed knowledge of the learning needs of every pupil.
- Children are provided with an excellent start to their education and personal development in the Reception and Nursery.
- All groups of pupils, including those supported by additional pupil premium funding, do particularly well.
- Although almost all more able pupils reach their full potential, the school does not yet provide enough specialist opportunities for its gifted and talented pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour and enthusiastic attitudes to learning are exemplary. Their care and respect for each other and adults make the school a happy and safe environment for all.
- The headteacher is an outstanding leader. Her ambitions for the high achievement of pupils are widely shared by an excellent team of leaders and the whole school staff.
- Leaders consistently drive successful improvement throughout the school, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The governing body offers outstanding challenge and support to the school, using a variety of skills to excellent effect.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Six of these lessons were observed with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of management teams, two governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They examined the school's development plans, checks on how well it is doing, safeguarding arrangements, health and safety records, school policies and a range of pupils' work and information about their progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 42 responses to the online Parent View survey. They also held informal discussions with parents in school.
- The inspectors examined 33 questionnaires from members of staff.

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's The Mount Catholic Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British, and almost a third of pupils come from a range of other ethnic heritages. This number continues to rise.
- Just over a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language. A small number of pupils speak little or no English when they enter the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is below average. The proportion supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- A small number of pupils are supported through the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for particular groups: children in the care of the local authority, children from service families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. There are currently no pupils on the school roll from the first two of these groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school is organised into seven single-year classes and a Nursery.
- The school provides well-attended pre-school and after-school clubs, as well as a summer holiday club.
- There have been a number of changes of staff since the previous inspection four years ago.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Expand the skills and knowledge of gifted and talented pupils to higher levels of expertise, by:
 - seeking and providing a greater range of challenging and demanding activities from both school and external resources
 - working as closely as possible in partnership with the parents of these pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- In recent years children have entered the Nursery with skill and understanding levels lower than in the past and lower than those expected for their age. This is mainly because there are an increasing number of children starting school who speak English as an additional language. They make outstanding progress in Nursery and Reception, especially in their language and personal and social skills.
- By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, standards are above average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. In mathematics a high number of pupils reach standards well above average.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in all years. Virtually every pupil makes the progress expected for their age, and many more make better-than-expected progress. This includes disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- For the last six years at least, pupils have reached high levels of attainment and achievement, and this trend is continuing. Inspection evidence indicates that the great majority of pupils continue to make exceptional progress throughout the school.
- Although there were no pupils supported by the pupil premium in Year 6 in 2013, the small number who left in 2012 reached levels of attainment in English and mathematics similar to or higher than those reached by other pupils. Their continuing outstanding progress ensures that the gap in performance between them and other pupils in their early years narrows consistently, so that by the time they reach Year 6 there is no longer the gap in attainment.
- This is because the extra teaching and personalised support provided by the school and paid for by the pupil premium fund are strongly focused on the needs of each individual. This was observed to good effect in a mathematics lesson in Year 6 when pupils were solving problems with angles and beginning to work out and use formulae. Some managed independently, but as in most classes, there were adults with excellent subject knowledge on hand to guide and support others.
- Pupils enjoy reading and benefit from a thorough and well-understood structure of reading progress, and excellent learning of letters and sounds (phonics) in their early years. Pupils do well in the national phonics check for Year 1. School leaders also ensure that parents have opportunities to learn the school's methods of teaching reading.
- Pupils' literacy skills are also enhanced by their regular extended written reviews and descriptions of the books they have read. These, like much of their writing, are well presented, and show the pride they take in their work.
- The school gives many opportunities for pupils to achieve very well in other subjects such as music, art, French and information and communication technology. Pupils' singing in assemblies, and by the choir, is of exceptional quality.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently at least good and often outstanding throughout the school. It is based

firmly upon detailed knowledge of the individual needs of every pupil and their previous learning. Regular checks are made on the progress of all pupils, the results are shared between pupils and adults, and personal plans and targets are set as a result.

- Teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding of their pupils are evident from the time children begin in Nursery and continue throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. This was seen most effectively in an activity in Reception when children learned about different fruits through a story, and had opportunities to read, make pictures and learn about other cultures.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, planning concentrates particularly on the personal and social development of children. As a result teachers and teaching assistants successfully enable all children to make exceptional progress.
- Teaching across the main school is constantly challenging, imaginative and at the same time enjoyable. This was observed in many lessons, for example in a writing exercise in Year 5, when pupils learned how to write short sentences for dramatic effect while watching a mysterious film about Robin Hood in the forest.
- A further example of imaginative teaching was seen in Year 6 when pupils wrote about life below decks on a Tudor ship, and did this in a very dark classroom to simulate the theme.
- An outstanding feature of teaching is the provision for small groups of learners who receive regular tuition, tailored to their needs, from a number of highly effective teachers and teaching assistants who are not class-based. Consequently, targeted pupils receive individualised teaching in mathematics and literacy on a regular basis.
- A group of more-able gifted and talented pupils receive monthly specialist teaching in mathematics at a local high school. However, school leaders have recognised that wider provision across more subjects could be provided for pupils with other gifts and talents in all year groups.
- Teachers have excellent expectations for their pupils, and there is consistency across the school in the opportunities pupils have to discuss their thinking and work with each other and sometimes with the whole class. This helps them develop their self-esteem and prepares them well for the next stages in their education.
- Teachers in all classes constantly encourage pupils' self-evaluation of their learning, mainly by the use of their coloured fans displaying to teachers their level of understanding. Teachers' marking is highly effective in all years, and exceptional in Year 6. This is because teachers are skilled at balancing praise with constructive guidance to pupils on how to improve.
- Teachers make conspicuous efforts to promote the development of literacy, numeracy and technology skills. High-quality examples of this were seen in pupils' work in science, history and religious education.
- Most teachers and assistants are skilled in the use of sign language, which pupils have been trained to understand. This is often used in lessons and assemblies, helping especially pupils in the early stages of learning English.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils love coming to the school, and have outstanding attitudes to learning and to each other. One summed up his feelings by saying, 'I wake up in the morning and feel happy and privileged that I am going to such a good school.'
- Pupils have a great enthusiasm for learning which they show in a wide range of stimulating and challenging activities. They name many different activities which they enjoy, such as art and sewing clubs, trips to the Botanical Gardens and Woodlands residential camp, choir competitions and dressing up for 'character day'.
- Pupils say they feel very safe, and that everyone behaves safely around school. This was seen during the inspection when they all gathered remarkably quickly and calmly outside when there was a genuine fire alarm. This included the Nursery children, celebrating at a birthday party.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception settle very quickly into school routines, rapidly learning what is expected of them. This is very helpful for the increasing number of children who speak little or no English on entry to the school, and have had no experience of pre-school opportunities.
- Behaviour in lessons is almost always outstanding because pupils are continually challenged and are so eager to do their best. Pupils have exceptional and detailed knowledge of their learning targets and the levels at which they are working and trying to reach.
- Parents and staff who contributed their opinions have no concerns about behaviour and safety and neither they nor pupils report problems with bullying: 'definitely no fighting, only someone being cheeky sometimes'. They are very clear about the dangers of bullying through the internet or mobile phones. Importantly in a multicultural school, pupils report no racial incidents or name-calling.
- Pupils are polite, well mannered and respectful to adults and each other. This is reflected in the buzzing school environment which is testament to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Exclusions are very rare, and attendance is high because school leaders have worked consistently over the years to ensure this.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The outstanding and inspirational headteacher, with excellent support from the deputy headteacher, has built a highly motivated and ambitious management team who share her passion for wanting to give the pupils the best start they can have in their education and personal development.
- The whole staff works together very effectively as a team in which everyone knows their job and, most importantly, the needs of the pupils in their care.
- All teachers, and often teaching assistants, welcome management responsibilities with enthusiasm. This includes a continual process of monitoring pupils' progress and striving for improvement.

- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding, and prepare children very successfully for transition from Reception to Year 1.
- While subject leaders monitor their subjects closely and play a full part in the strategic planning of school improvement, the headteacher and deputy headteacher are involved in a well-planned structure of rigorous and meticulous monitoring of teaching and learning. The high quality of support and guidance to teachers is the main reason for the outstanding standard of teaching seen throughout the school.
- Teachers are further helped by the effective linking of their performance targets to frequent opportunities for further training to develop their skills. A significant number indicated in their questionnaires appreciation of professional development opportunities provided by leaders.
- The school leadership has an excellent record for improvement and has successfully dealt with issues from the last inspection in the Early Years and in teaching. The school also continues to raise the bar in terms of pupils' performance, as, for example, in the huge strides made in challenging pupils to reach high levels in mathematics.
- Thoughtful use of the pupil premium grant has resulted in exemplary progress for these pupils, through better resources and targeted one-to-one support. Although the school has not yet received the new extra sports funding, the subject leader has already identified to the governing body an action plan for its use. This highlights the training of staff in order for the school to have long-term effective teaching without the frequent need to buy in professional coaches.
- The school is thoroughly inclusive, and promotes equal opportunities at all times. The school allows no discrimination through gender, ethnicity, disability or special educational needs.
- School leaders have been successful in providing a well-organised and -managed range of extended care for pupils and children, before and after school and in the holidays.
- The local authority has a high regard for the school and its leaders. It has always worked closely with the school, which has used the local authority advisors frequently to help its improvement.
- Parents are extremely pleased with the school, and only a very small number expressed concerns that there was either too much homework or too little. Inspection evidence did not confirm either of these views.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed, ambitious and challenging to leaders. Effectively led by an experienced Chair, members stay very closely in touch with the school at all times. They are continually involved in school self-evaluation, which is astute and accurate and benefits from the many visits they make to the school. They are well informed about the quality of teaching. Governors monitor pupils' performance closely, and have a good knowledge of the use of the pupil premium fund. They are completely familiar with the analysis of performance management and are in the process of introducing a new pay and conditions policy for staff, in order to relate teachers' pay to their targets for pupils' performance. They have a rolling programme of policy reviews, and ensure that safeguarding fully meets government 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	104232
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	429488

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	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joseph Hawley
Headteacher	Catherine Amos
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 February 2009
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