

St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary School

Sidney Powell Avenue, Westvale, Kirkby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L32 0TP

Inspection dates 30–31 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- Attainment is significantly above the national average. From low starting points pupils make very rapid progress and achieve very well.
- High quality teaching ensures that pupils learn well. It is never less than good and a substantial proportion is outstanding.
- Highly effective systems for assessing pupils' progress enable teachers to plan work which meet the needs of all its pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent and contributes strongly to the outstanding progress they make. They are very eager to learn and understand its importance in their lives. However, despite the efforts of the school there remains a minority of pupils who miss too much school.
- Positive relationships are strengths of the school. Pupils and adults respect each other and there is a 'can do' culture in the school.
- The school works hard to promote good links with parents. The overwhelming majority of parents are happy with the all-round education their children receive.
- The school's leadership is outstanding. It has high ambitions for the school which are shared by all staff. Its relentless and highly focused drive to raise standards in the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment has resulted in rapid and significant improvements being achieved since the last inspection.
- Rigorous systems for monitoring teachers' performance and pupils' progress are in place which are ensuring a relentless driving up of standards. However, the role played by middle managers in this process is not yet fully exploited.
- A broad and rich curriculum provides pupils with a wide variety of excellent opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills, pursue their own interests and develop their self-confidence. This, combined with high academic achievement, ensures that by the end of Year 6, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Governors are very well informed and knowledgeable about all aspects of the school's life and, while being highly supportive of its work, hold it and its leaders rigorously to account.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 21 lessons including two joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a few short visits to classes and events including a theatre group performance, to observe the pupils, and also hear pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, representatives of the governing body, two representatives of the local authority, a group of parents and two groups of pupils. Inspectors also talked to pupils on the playground.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documents including: the school's own information about pupils' progress; planning; the monitoring of learning and teacher performance; organisation of the curriculum; safeguarding information; and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors also took account of 15 responses to the on-line survey (Parent View), 47 questionnaires filled in by parents, a telephone call with a parent and also 25 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Peter Martin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Halford	Additional Inspector
Feheem Chrishti	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an above average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than found nationally and of those for whom English is an additional language is also well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities that are supported at school action is above average and those supported at school action plus is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. (This is additional funding provided by the government for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after.)
- The school has received a number of awards including Healthy School status, The International School award, Arts Marks and the Eco-Schools Silver award.
- The school exceeds 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?

- Provide more opportunities for middle managers to extend the scope of their responsibilities.
- Continue to improve attendance to reach or exceed the school's stated attendance targets so that all pupils can benefit from uninterrupted learning and have a better opportunity to reach their full potential.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Most children enter nursery with skills and abilities which are below those typical for their age and a substantial proportion of them are well below, particularly in speaking and listening skills. Pupils make outstanding progress in each key stage and by the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment is significantly above average.
- As a result of effective changes to the approaches to teaching, rapid improvements have been made since the last inspection resulting in high levels of attainment being achieved. All Year 6 pupils make the expected progress in English and mathematics and the proportion of pupils who make more than average progress is higher than seen nationally.
- The school's internal pupil progress data show a similar picture with most pupils making expected progress while in Key Stage 2 and the proportion exceeding it being well above average.
- Children settle into nursery quickly and feel very secure. As a result of imaginative teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, focused on the children's needs, most pupils start in Key Stage 1 with skills and abilities typical for their age but with a small proportion still below.
- A well-chosen programme for developing reading and writing supported by well-focused additional training for teachers has resulted in improvements in teaching and marked and sustained improvements in attainment in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Pupils now make outstanding progress. Pupils, particularly the most able, are provided with appropriate level of challenge for their ability. They learn rapidly and attainment is significantly above the national average in both key stages.
- The standards of pupils' written work are consistently good. Pupils use high quality vocabulary, appropriate to each subject, in their written and spoken responses. For example, one pupil talked knowledgeably about using different 'solvents' and 'evaporating liquids' to find 'a hidden ingredient' when describing science investigations he had done.
- Pupils take pride in their work and pupils' presentation is consistently good.
- The teaching of phonics (the links between letters, sounds and spelling) and the teaching of reading in general is a real strength of the school. Pupils in Year 1 were able to read accurately and with good understanding and decode unknown words confidently and independently. This is reinforced and developed through the school so that by Year 6 pupils are reading fiction and non-fiction texts with considerable skill, confidence and enjoyment.
- Pupils have a mature understanding of the importance of reading in their lives. They read widely and often and with great enjoyment. All pupils achieve at least the expected standard of attainment and a majority of pupils achieve above it.
- Attainment in mathematical knowledge and skills is also high and pupils are able to apply their skills to more complex problems and carry out mathematical investigations independent of the teacher. For example, in a Year 5 lesson pupils carried out an exercise in data collection and interpretation which required them to use good organisational skills and high levels of cooperation.
- Pupils apply their literacy and numeracy skills extremely well when working in different subjects. The quality of their topic work is very good. The strong links made between different subjects is a key feature of the school's work. Pupils are able to write effectively using the appropriate writing style for different purposes.
- Thorough systems for early identification, checking on their progress and planning well-targeted support for pupils with disabilities or special educational needs ensure that these pupils make outstanding progress in their learning from very low starting points. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are few in number but make outstanding progress and achieve extremely well.
- The extremely effective use of pupil premium funding ensures that their progress is as rapid as other pupils, and by the end of Year 6 all have made at least the expected progress and a substantial proportion have exceeded it. Their attainment is broadly the same in reading and two and three terms behind in writing and mathematics respectively.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- A relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching has resulted in teaching of a consistently high quality. It is never less than good and a substantial proportion of it is outstanding.
- The school systems for assessing pupils' progress in lessons and through marking of books are real strengths of the school. They enable teachers to accurately track the progress of pupils and determine what they need to learn next and plan interesting lessons that meet pupils' different needs and abilities with the appropriate level of challenge.
- Lessons are taught at a good lively pace which keeps pupils motivated and eager to learn and enables them to learn quickly in lessons. Pupils say 'teachers make learning fun'.
- Innovative ideas capture pupils' interest. For example, Year 2 pupils were investigating a serious incident in Fairyland. A member of the support staff posed as a policewoman and was interviewed by pupils about the incident. Pupils made notes on tablets to assist them in writing reports later that day.
- Teachers consistently set high expectations of behaviour and work. Well-established routines and excellent relationships ensure that lessons run smoothly and little time is wasted.
- Independence is encouraged and developed from the nursery upwards. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves. For example, the nursery children, having read the book 'We're going on a Bear Hunt' went on a bear hunt of their own in the outdoor area and found him up a tree. They were then challenged to come up with solutions for getting him down again. The activity generated much excitement. An older pupil in Key Stage 2 described how he had researched the Second World War, and then made a presentation of his photos and work to the rest of his class.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge which enables them to teach all subjects with confidence. They use excellent questioning skills to extend pupils' thinking and also to check on understanding in order to modify their teaching if necessary.
- Praise is used very effectively to encourage pupils to make contributions to class discussions. Consequently, pupils are not afraid to answer questions or offer their ideas.
- The standard of marking is consistently high. It routinely tells pupils what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve and time is given for them respond to it.
- Teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They carry out clear roles and responsibilities with great skill.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school provides a calm and safe environment where pupils feel secure and can thrive. There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils and adults show a mutual respect for each other. Pupils feel very safe and well cared for by all adults in the school.
- Pupils and staff believe that behaviour is very good and these views on safety and behaviour are shared by the overwhelming majority of parents.
- Behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are polite and helpful and have excellent manners. They are eager to learn. They enjoy their lessons and listen carefully to their teachers and work with one another very well. Consequently, lessons run smoothly without any disruption to learning.
- Pupils are also eager to take on responsibilities in school, for example, running the school tuck shop or serving on the school and eco councils. They care for each other. One older pupil said, 'If we see someone on their own or hurt we go to see if they are all right.' When asked whether that was their role he said, 'No, we just do it!' They respond spontaneously to the needs of others and organise and participate in fund-raising for those in need of help.
- The school takes a robust stance on absence. It works very hard to encourage good attendance with a wide range of initiatives. However, although attendance has improved, and is currently about the national average, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent remains above average.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, they are fully aware of the potential

dangers of internet use. This is because they have received effective teaching from the school. They are adamant that there is no bullying. They have a deep understanding of what it is and are confident that if minor fallings-out occur they will be dealt with promptly and effectively by the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- School leaders have high ambitions for the school, to continually drive up standards of teaching and the achievement of all pupils, and they take effective steps to bring them about. These ambitions are shared by all staff and the wider school community and as a consequence dramatic improvements have been made since the last inspection and all areas for improvement effectively addressed.
- Rigorous systems for checking on the quality of teaching and teachers' performance, linked to pay progression, are in place. Regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching supported by high-quality additional training for teachers have resulted in significant improvements in the quality of teaching. Teachers are committed to self-improvement and the raising of standards and feel very well supported in their professional development.
- Assessment procedures and the tracking of pupils' progress are exemplary. Regular pupil progress meetings are used rigorously to identify any pupils falling behind and challenging targets are aimed at ensuring pupils make better than the expected progress to bring them up from their low starting points.
- The school leadership uses assessment data and monitoring information to assess the school performance. Its judgements, and the challenging targets it sets for further improvement in a comprehensive school improvement plan, reflect the very high standards and ambition it has.
- The school works hard to engage with its parents with extensive systems of communications and a range of parent-based activities to better inform parents and encourage their involvement with the school.
- This is a highly inclusive school in which the exceptionally close watch leaders and managers keep on provision for the individual ensures excellent equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- Systems are now in place to enable middle managers to play a greater role in the monitoring of standards in teaching and pupil achievement. However, they are at an early stage and it is too early to judge their effectiveness or gauge the impact on learning.
- The school provides a rich and broad curriculum which widens the experience of its pupils and creates opportunities to develop their understanding of their community and the world. The wide range of musical, artistic, sporting and after-school activities, as well as trips and visitors and learning about other cultures and beliefs, contribute hugely to the spiritual, moral, and social and cultural development of its pupils.
- Owing to the improvements made by the school, the local authority now regards the school as one that can now provide support for other schools and provides only light touch support.
- The school arrangements for pupil safeguarding and child protection are exemplary and meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely well informed. They have detailed knowledge of the standards in the school, the quality of teaching and the current priorities for school improvement. They carefully scrutinise and approve plans for the use of additional pupil premium funding and sports provision and monitor it closely to determine its impact on pupils' outcomes and provision. Sports funding is providing additional opportunities for pupils' participation and improve the teachers' competence in the teaching of sport. They hold the school and its leaders rigorously to account. Finances are managed very efficiently.

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	104464
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	426063

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	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr. Andrew Rowlands
Headteacher	Louise Bowman
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2011
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