

SS Mary and Michael Catholic Primary School

Castle Lane, Garstang, Preston, Lancashire, PR3 1RB

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Children enter the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding typical for their age. They make good progress and attain standards by the end of Year 6 which are well above average in mathematics and above average in reading and writing.
- Teaching is good with some outstanding practice. Teachers explain clearly what it is that pupils are learning and hence they know precisely what is expected of them. Support staff are experienced and guide pupils' learning well.
- Pupils are happy, feel safe and enjoy school very much. This is represented in their good attendance. Pupils speak highly of all staff and say, 'teachers are friendly and caring'. These strong relationships have a good impact on pupils' learning and well-being. Pupils behave well, are polite, welcoming and courteous.
- The headteacher leads the school well. She has a clear plan for how to improve it further and is fully supported by teachers, governors and parents. Both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are improving because these areas are checked closely by senior leaders and governors.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is good but not outstanding overall. Most-able pupils are not always consistently challenged throughout the lesson in some classes. Pupils are not sufficiently given the opportunity to lead their own learning.
- Staff with responsibility for overseeing subjects do not have a clear enough understanding of pupils' performance data to enable them to influence further improvement to pupils' achievement. They are not yet recording their observations of teaching, of pupils' work and of teachers' planning closely enough in order to have a full understanding of their areas of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five lessons and visited various classrooms for short periods of time.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, senior leaders, and teachers with responsibilities for leading and managing subjects and key stages. A meeting was held with a group of governors and with a representative from the local authority.
- Results from 44 responses to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into consideration by the inspector.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including: the school's data showing pupils' current progress; documents relating to the school's own view of its performance; the school improvement plan; records relating to attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Pritiben Patel, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than most other primary schools.
- Most pupils are of White British background. A small number of pupils are from Asian and other White heritages.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A small proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding. This is additional funding given to schools by the government to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Breakfast and after-school care is available for pupils. This is run by an independent provider and is subject to a separate inspection.
- There is provision for pre-school children once a week. This is run on a voluntary basis and is not subject to a separate inspection.
- The school shares the same grounds with the nursery Hummingbirds, which is run by an independent provider and is subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding overall by ensuring:
 - most-able pupils are consistently challenged throughout lessons
 - pupils have greater opportunities to take a lead in their own learning in all classes.

- Improve the quality of the leadership and management of staff who are responsible for overseeing curriculum subjects by ensuring:
 - they have a better understanding of pupils' performance so that they have a greater effect on raising pupils' achievement
 - they record closely their observations of teaching, pupils' work and teachers' planning to better their understanding of their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Reception class with skills that are typical for their age. Almost all children achieve a good level of development and half exceed the expectations for age by the time they enter Year 1. This represents good progress. They achieve well because adults are caring and activities are thoughtfully planned so that they interest and enthuse children. For example, children were developing their understanding of quantity, 'more than' and 'less than' by making play dough. The children chose different ingredients that changed the colour and smell of the play dough by adding, 'more' or 'less' of a particular ingredient. The children very much enjoyed this activity and made good progress.
- A greater proportion of pupils than nationally attained the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters make) test in 2013. This is because pupils have good opportunities to apply their understanding of phonics. For example, in a Key Stage 1 phonics lesson, pupils learnt the different ways that the 's' sound can be made and then they highlighted as many words as they could find with this sound in a piece of writing. This helped the pupils to use and apply their understanding of sounds.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are average. Standards by the end of Year 6 in reading and writing are above average and well above average in mathematics. This represents good achievement.
- Mathematics is a stronger area of pupils' performance. Writing is relatively weaker. In 2013, although standards in writing were not as high as in mathematics and reading pupils' attainment in this subject still represented good progress from pupils' starting points.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well because there is no significant gap in the performance of different groups. The small numbers of pupils of Asian heritage achieve well. Those pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals attain standards that are higher than schools nationally. Pupils from other White backgrounds achieve well.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs have individual plans with specific targets to meet their needs which are regularly reviewed. As a result, these pupils achieve in line with their peers.
- The proportion of pupils making expected progress and more than expected progress compares favourably with other schools.
- At the end of 2013, the achievement of the most able pupils was better than schools nationally, but not significantly so in mathematics. In comparison with other schools, their achievement in reading was slightly better but in writing it was below the average of all schools. Senior leaders recognise that the achievement of the most able pupils requires developing further.

The quality of teaching is good

- Although there is some outstanding practice, teaching is good overall. Parents too agree that their children are taught well. Strong relationships between staff and pupils ensure that the classroom atmosphere is very positive. Teachers are enthusiastic which motivates pupils well. There is usually a fast pace to lessons and teachers have good subject knowledge and this enables them to question and develop pupils' understanding well. This was evident in the Reception class when children were learning about number. The teacher asked high quality questions to deepen children's understanding. For example, 'What is the difference between 20 and 10?' 'How much more is 10 than six?'
- Support staff provide good help for pupils, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs and as a result they achieve well.
- Homework is set on a regular basis to reinforce and extend pupils' learning.
- In some lessons, teachers closely plan activities to effectively challenge the most able pupils. For

example, in a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson, pupils were learning how to find the area of shapes. Some pupils calculated the area of simple shapes by multiplying the length by the width, whilst the most able worked out the area of complicated shapes which required additional work and skills. This challenged pupils well. However, this good practice is not consistent in all lessons. For example, in a Key Stage 1 phonics session, although pupils were being taught in groups according to their ability, the spelling of key words were too easy for some pupils. This slowed the progress of the most able.

- In a Key Stage 1 mathematics lesson, the teacher worked with groups of pupils enhancing their understanding of 10s and units. The most able pupils were working out problems, deciding whether they were going to add or subtract, then solve the problem and explain their working. However, although this activity challenged the most able pupils well, once this session with the teacher finished, pupils then chose a variety of activities that were not as difficult. Hence, suitable challenge was not evident throughout the lesson.
- When pupils have the opportunity to take a lead in their own learning, they rise to the challenge and want to complete the activity set for them. For example, in a Key Stage 2 English lesson, pupils learnt about the apostrophe and its different uses. They were asked to work in pairs or groups to find different examples of how apostrophes were used in a range of books. Pupils were totally engrossed in this and tried to find as many examples as possible. However, in some lessons teachers direct learning too much and this does not help pupils to develop independence. For example, in a Key Stage 2 English lesson, the teacher conducted a question and answer session to develop pupils' understanding of spellings. Not all pupils were involved and some started to lose concentration.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- In this small school, staff know pupils and their families well. All pupils are included and looked after extremely well. Both staff and pupils are happy and as a result this is a happy school. As one pupil said reflecting the opinions of many, 'Everyone gets along, it's like home'.
- Pupils are well behaved and parents agree. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. They sometimes need gentle reminders during less structured times, such as break and lunchtimes. They have positive attitudes to their learning and relish the opportunities they are given to take a lead in their own learning. In addition, when they are given the opportunity to collaborate with one another, they do this extremely well. However, pupils do not have this opportunity in all lessons and can become passive learners.
- Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of safety. The lunchtime club, 'Safety Stars' develops pupils' understanding well of how to keep safe. Pupils know about stranger danger because the local police have spoken to them about this. They know about the dangers associated with illegal drugs and smoking. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet.
- Bullying is not an issue for pupils. They say that if it was to happen it would be quickly dealt with by staff. Pupils say that the term, 'gay' is used to hurt the feelings of other pupils but only on rare occasions. Pupils from different backgrounds get along well and racism is not a problem. There has been one permanent exclusion in the last academic year.
- Pupils have a good range of opportunities to demonstrate responsibility and maturity. For example, pupils have contributed to developing the school's mission statement. 'Ambassadors' help to manage the office. Buddies are proud of the role they have in helping other pupils who may be sad or need a friend at break and lunchtimes. The Eco-Council encourages recycling and have designed posters to advertise this.
- Attendance is good.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is passionate about her role and works successfully to secure pupils' good achievement and well-being. She strives for continuous improvement and is capable of moving the school forward. The school's review of its own performance is detailed and thorough. Appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified in the school development plan.
- Secure progress has been made since the last inspection and the quality of teaching and good achievement of all pupils has been sustained. The assessment and tracking of pupils' progress has improved. Assessments take place on a half-termly basis and those pupils who are not making the expected progress are identified and support is provided. Individual targets are set for pupils in English and mathematics which they understand. This is having positive results on achievement.
- Teachers' performance is regularly checked and areas for improvement are identified when necessary. Teachers are helped to improve their practice through relevant training and through working alongside particularly talented colleagues. Teachers are held to account for the progress that pupils make.
- The curriculum is taught through topics, so that pupils acquire new skills and develop understanding in different contexts. A range of visitors support the curriculum well, for example, authors, poets, paramedics as well as the local police. Visits outside make learning meaningful for pupils, such as those to the local area and museums.
- Staff support each other well. As one member of staff said representing the views of many, 'There is a great sense of teamwork where everyone is valued'. Staff with responsibility for curriculum subjects are passionate about their roles and keen to provide the best education for their pupils. They check the quality of teaching, pupils' work in books and teachers' planning. However, they do not formally record their findings to help them to have a detailed view of their areas of responsibility. In addition, their understanding of pupils' performance information is not sufficiently secure to help them to improve pupils' achievement further.
- Parents are kept well informed in a variety of ways, including the school website. They receive progress reports and have the opportunity to attend parents' meetings on a termly basis. Curriculum afternoons are held at the start of the academic year to inform parents about the year ahead. Parents listen to pupils read and support various other activities.
- The new Primary School Sport funding is used to develop the skills of staff in different sports. Pupils also receive specialist coaching in, for example, rugby and games skills.
- The local authority has supported the school in evaluating teaching and checking pupils' progress.
- Safeguarding meets government requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a range of different expertise and want the very best for the school and its pupils. Governors help with the recruitment of staff, they contribute to the school's review of its own performance and they check the school development plan. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and know how practice is being improved. They contribute to the targets set for the headteacher and manage her performance well. Governors challenge the school and they access training to develop their skills when necessary. They know where to find pupils' performance comparison figures and are developing further their understanding of data. Governors know that the pupil premium is being used on additional staffing and support for those pupils eligible for this funding and the impact this is having on their achievement. Finances are in good order.

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	119617
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	433168

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	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Mason
Headteacher	Cathryn Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2010
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