

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Morecambe

Coniston Road, Morecambe, Lancashire, LA4 5PS

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout the school from their different starting points.
- Teaching is good across the school. Teachers know pupils well and plan and teach lessons that lead to good progress, especially in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well because they are well supported and work is carefully planned to meet their needs.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. They say they are well looked after and feel very safe in school.
- School leaders and governors have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and where it can be further improved. They have secured improvements to teaching and achievement.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in reading and writing is not as strong as in mathematics.
- In some lessons, especially in English, teachers do not make sure that pupils, particularly the most able, are challenged to make the best possible progress.
- Teachers have too few opportunities to observe outstanding teaching in other schools.
- Leaders and managers do not analyse and use data about pupils' progress and achievement as effectively as they might.
- Attendance is below average as too many pupils are absent on holidays or short breaks during term time.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or part lessons, including one observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with school leaders and managers and with five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors also met a representative from the local authority.
- Discussions were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke informally to other pupils in lessons and during break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed the work pupils were doing in lessons and in their books over time. They listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 5 read and talked to them about their enjoyment of reading.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and examined a number of documents. These included data concerning pupils' current achievement, development plans and performance management information. Inspectors also looked at records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements. Minutes of governing body meetings and the school adviser's reports were also considered.
- Inspectors took account of 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered 14 responses to the questionnaires completed by staff for the inspection.

Inspection team

Robert Birtwell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elaine Maloney

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Only a very small number of pupils in each year group are supported by the pupil premium.
- Pupils are taught in six classes from the Reception Year to Year 6, including some mixed-age classes.
- A large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average and is increasing, especially pupils who speak Polish as a first language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching to further raise pupils' achievement, especially in reading and writing, by ensuring that:
 - work is always matched closely to pupils' needs, and that the most able pupils, in particular, are consistently challenged to make the best possible progress
 - there are more opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding teaching in other schools to enable them to further improve their skills.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by making sure that leaders at all levels make better use of data to analyse pupils' progress so they have a fuller picture of how well pupils are doing and can make a greater contribution to school improvement.
- Improve attendance by reducing the number of pupils who are absent because of extended breaks or holidays during term time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are generally below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Reception Year and are well prepared to enter Key Stage 1 with standards that are close to national expectations.
- Pupils do well during Key Stage 1. Standards have risen since the previous inspection and are typically average, although there was a slight fall in 2013.
- Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 2. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 have risen over the last three years. In 2013, they were above average in mathematics, and broadly average in reading and writing.
- The school's system for checking how well pupils are doing shows that they are currently making good progress from their individual starting points and achieving well throughout the school. This includes pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, pupils who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium and those who speak English as an additional language. This is confirmed by inspection evidence from lesson observations and work in pupils' books.
- There is a strong focus on the teaching of numeracy. As a result, pupils have well developed mathematical skills and make very good progress.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that pupils read regularly and have a good knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was below average in 2013, but this included a high proportion of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English.
- Pupils' writing skills are secure and they write effectively in a range of styles in different subjects across the curriculum.
- However, achievement in mathematics is stronger than in reading and writing. Fewer pupils make good progress in reading and writing than in mathematics. In particular, the most able pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable in reading and writing because they are not always given work to tackle that offers sufficient challenge.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. This enables them to participate fully in lessons and make good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are accurately identified and they receive effective support. As a result, they typically achieve as well as other pupils.
- In this school, the pupil premium funding is used well to support individual pupils. This shows the school's successful commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good across the school and this enables pupils in all year groups to learn well. Pupils made good progress in almost all the lessons seen during the inspection, and work in pupils' books shows that teaching has been good over time and has improved.
- Teachers know pupils well and there are good relationships between pupils and their teachers. Teachers plan work that is usually well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, and motivates and engages them in their learning. Pupils say they enjoy lessons, and are keen to do well.
- In a mathematics lesson, for example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were working to improve their skills in dealing with fractions. The teacher made sure that all groups of pupils, including the most able, had different and challenging activities, and used questioning skilfully to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and to extend their learning. As a result, the pupils enjoyed the lesson, had to think hard about what they were doing and made good progress.

- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. They use praise effectively and give detailed comments and suggestions for the next steps in pupils' learning. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective. Teachers make sure that learning is purposeful and well matched to children's varying levels of development. There is a balance between activities the teacher directs and those the children choose themselves, and children make good progress.
- Where pupils do not make good progress in some lessons, work is not well enough matched to pupils' needs and abilities. In some English lessons, for example, the most able pupils are not always given work that is challenging enough to enable them to reach the highest levels and to make the best possible progress in reading and writing. In these lessons, the pace of learning is slower.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to help pupils who find learning more difficult. They provide extra support, either within lessons or in individual or small group sessions. This includes pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium, those who speak English as an additional language and those who are disabled or have special educational needs. As a result, these pupils make good progress in line with their classmates.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Evidence from the school's behaviour records and talking to pupils shows that poor behaviour is rare, and that the school responds appropriately and effectively when it does occur.
- Pupils are polite and courteous and say they enjoy school a lot. One parent said that her daughter regularly 'runs out of school to tell me how much fun she has had'.
- Pupils get on well with their teachers and with each other. They are proud of their school and wear their uniforms smartly. They take pride in their work and behave well in lessons so that learning proceeds smoothly and without interruption. One pupil said that 'everyone just gets on with it' and another recognised the importance of learning 'as it's the only way of getting a job'.
- Inspectors observed good behaviour around the school. Pupils play sensibly on the playgrounds, and act responsibly at lunchtime.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of the different forms bullying can take, including name-calling and cyber-bullying. They say that there is very little bullying in school, and are confident that the school would sort it out quickly if it happened.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel very safe in school, and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when using the internet, when cycling and on roads. All parents who responded to the Parent View survey thought that their child was safe and well looked after in school, and inspection evidence confirms this.
- The school has identified that some groups of pupils do not attend well enough and has worked hard to raise pupils' attendance. This has improved but remains below average. Most pupils attend well but there is a small minority who do not attend regularly enough because of extended breaks or holidays during term time.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders and managers, including governors, have a clear understanding of how well the school is performing, and where it needs to do better. They have ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been tackled. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved and pupils' achievement has risen.
- The school development plan clearly identifies the key priorities for improvement and is focused on further improving teaching and raising achievement. For example, leaders are aware that

progress in reading and writing is not as strong as in mathematics, and there are plans to address this.

- Improved systems are used to check on pupils' progress and achievement. Any underachievement is addressed by providing extra help when pupils need it. As a result, there are no significant differences in performance between different groups of pupils.
- Information about pupils' progress is considered when judging how well teachers are doing, and is taken into account when making decisions about their salary.
- There are effective systems to check the quality of teaching. These identify where further support is needed and contribute to teachers' professional development. Training and coaching have improved the quality of teaching, and this, too, has led to rising achievement.
- While teaching is good, no outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection and a small proportion still requires improvement. There are too few opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding teaching in other schools in order to further improve their own practice.
- Middle leaders are accountable for pupils' achievement and progress in their areas. This is effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage and for those pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs, where leaders use data effectively and have a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing. However, not all leaders analyse and use data about pupils' achievement and progress as well as they might in order to help them plan further improvement.
- The curriculum is well planned and enriched by a range of activities, clubs, trips and visits, including sport, music, drama and cultural activities. A very successful multicultural week in 2013 led to pupils' work being published as an 'African Tails' book.
- Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities in areas such as the school council and older pupils act as 'buddies' for younger pupils. The school has a clear Christian ethos and has close links with the local church. These all contribute to pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is using the additional primary school sports funding successfully to improve the quality of physical education in the school. Specialist coaches and teachers run activities, take lessons and train staff. This has broadened the range of sporting activities in the school and is having a positive impact on pupils' physical well-being and lifestyles.
- The local authority has provided light touch but effective support for this good school in areas such as training for leaders and managers, including governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Many governors are relatively new, but they are committed to, and very supportive of, the school. They have undertaken training to improve their knowledge and skills and are well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and progress. They know what the school does well and where it needs to improve. As a result, they have become increasingly effective at holding the school to account by asking searching questions, particularly in regular informal meetings with the headteacher. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it has on the achievement and progress of pupils known to be eligible for support from this funding. They set challenging targets as part of the headteacher's appraisal and ensure that pupils' progress is included as part of teachers' appraisal and when making decisions about teachers' salaries. Governors make sure that the school's finances are sound and that they meet all their statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding.

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	119622
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	430975

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	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Routh
Headteacher	Michael Manton
Date of previous school inspection	30 May 2012
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