

# St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School, Lowton

Cranham Avenue, Lowton, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 2PQ

**Inspection dates** 28–29 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- All groups of pupils make good academic progress. By the time they leave they reach standards that are consistently above average particularly in reading and writing.
- Teaching is usually good in all classes. Teachers have high expectations and activities interest and inspire pupils.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They behave well, have positive attitudes towards learning and show pride in their school.
- Pupils enjoy school; most attend well and they are rarely late. They look after their school and there is little litter or graffiti. Bullying is very rare.
- Governance of the school is strong. The governing body has an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is rigorous in holding leaders to account.
- Staff are not complacent and have a clear ambition to continue to improve. This is exemplified in the high targets they set for pupils' progress.
- The school is well led and managed by the acting headteacher. Together with other leaders, she has ensured improvements to pupils' achievement and to the quality of teaching.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although most pupils reach the standards expected, progress in mathematics is not as rapid as in writing and reading, particularly for the most able
- Marking does not always help pupils to know how to improve their work or give them opportunities to address errors.
- Parents need more information to allow them to understand the progress their children are making.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed nine lessons including one observed jointly with the acting headteacher.
- Inspectors made short visits to other classes, looked at pupils' workbooks, work on display and listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils informally around the school and met with the school council, the acting headteacher, other staff, governors and parents.
- A telephone discussion was held with the school's local authority adviser.
- Inspectors took account of the 28 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and spoke to one parent individually. The responses to the school's own questionnaire sent out in autumn 2013 were also considered. Eight staff responded to the Ofsted questionnaire.
- A number of documents, including: the school's own information on pupils' progress; planning and monitoring documentation; the school's view of its own performance; records of how funding is used, especially how the money from pupil premium is spent; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding were examined.

## Inspection team

John Nixon, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pamela Hemphill

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (the extra government funding for pupils looked after by the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those whose parents are in the armed services) is very low.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are taught in seven classes, each with a single year group.
- The school is part of a local consortium of primary and secondary schools.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics in order to improve pupils' progress, particularly that of the most able by:
  - improving the quality of marking and feedback given to pupils so that they know how to improve their work and build upon their successes
  - introducing better systems to share best practice and ideas in teaching.
- Improve communication with parents, particularly regarding their children's development and progress by:
  - seeking parents' views about how they would like information to be shared and taking all reasonable steps to implement this
  - updating the school website with user-friendly information regarding the school's policies and procedures.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, all groups of children make good progress, particularly in language and social skills, and generally leave with levels of development that are typical or better for their age. A large proportion of children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development below that which is typical and make rapid progress to reach their expected levels of development by the end of their first term.
- The current standards achieved by pupils in the Year 1 phonics check are higher than the national averages because of actions taken by the school to improve upon the rather disappointing score in 2012. There has been a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils passing the check when they were retested in Year 2.
- Attainment in all subjects in Key Stage 1 has risen consistently and has remained above the national average for all groups of pupils. However, as is typical of the national picture, in mathematics girls do not perform as well as boys and in reading and writing boys do not perform as well as girls.
- Pupils continue their good progress through Year 1 and Year 2. Teachers plan interesting links between subjects and use technology well to engage pupils in their learning. For example, computers, used to promote the development of phonics skills, have resulted in significant improvements in learning.
- By the time most pupils leave Year 6 they are ready for their next phase of education. They attain well in reading and writing where the proportion of pupils reaching national expectations is above average for all groups and particularly high for girls and middle ability pupils in writing. Progress in writing in 2013 was particularly strong.
- In mathematics, attainment is also good but could be even better if pupils' progress in this subject was as good as in literacy. This is particularly the case for pupils who have lower ability levels and struggle in the subject. The most able pupils usually perform well, although the level of challenge for them in lessons is inconsistent.
- There are very few pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, and most make progress in line with their peers. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to that of others. This is because they are supported increasingly well in one-to-one and small-group sessions which effectively help them to learn.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Inspectors observed mostly good teaching but some was outstanding. This results in the pupils developing good skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects and behaving well in class.
- The current team of teachers are positive about how training has helped to improve their skills. For example, training in phonics in Key Stage 1 has resulted in significant improvements to the quality of teaching and this shows through in the results pupils attain.
- Teachers recognise that improvements are necessary in some areas of their work and their collaborative work with other schools is beginning to have an impact on improving teaching. For example, in a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson, calculations were linked to a topic on spies who solve problems relating to budgets and equipment. The pupils were captivated by their task and progress was clearly evident.
- Teaching assistants work effectively to target support where it is most needed. For example, one teaching assistant was observed working with a more able group of students on a mathematics task, in which she used highly effective questioning to draw out theories and explanations from pupils to help them learn.
- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers have high expectations of pupils and carefully link areas of the curriculum together. For example, in an art lesson in Key Stage 2 pupils made excellent

use of colour to represent feelings and emotions through the creations of masks to represent Pandora's Box. They not only had to design the colour scheme and make the masks but participated in activities to develop their communication skills.

- Teachers use technology very effectively. For example, in the Reception class, computers allow staff to record evidence that support their judgements on learning and share this with parents via a parent portal. Parents can also contribute evidence which improves the accuracy of judgements.
- Although teachers work together and share good practice, this is not yet done systematically enough to spread more of the outstanding aspects of teaching. For example, in some lessons the most able pupils are not challenged enough to allow them to increase their pace of progress.
- Marking is inconsistent. It is not used well enough to inform pupils about how they can improve their work or move to the next level of challenge. When it is used in this way, pupils do not always have opportunities to respond to the advice.
- Reading and writing are taught well and result in pupils achieving highly in these subjects. Pupils' written work in books and on display is of high quality and highlight how reading is used to stimulate learning. For example, in upper Key Stage 2, pupils' work on display shows deep understanding and empathy for characters in a book about evacuees in the Second World War. Pupils read widely and often. Some pupils, particularly some boys are reluctant readers at home. However, the school makes provision for this, ensuring pupils are given regular opportunities to read in school on a variety of topics.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe. Effective measures are in place to assess the risks of activities and the premises, including one for the resident chickens. Pupils are closely supervised during play times. There are good procedures to deal with minor accidents on the yard so they do not result in a reduction of supervision.
- Pupils understand how to keep safe. They are familiar with 'stranger danger', 'road safety' and 'e-safety' which are taught in lessons.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Almost all have positive attitudes to learning. The vast majority settle to work quickly so lessons can start on time and are eager to participate in activities. In one lesson in Key Stage 1, for example, pupils joined in enthusiastically in guided reading about '*Billy Bear*', wanting to share their reasons why Billy may have brought a ball to play with even though signs said 'no ball games'. One reason given was 'maybe he cannot read!'
- Major disruption to lessons is rare; none was seen during the inspection. Pupils' behaviour around the school is almost always good. The vast majority of pupils are polite and respectful of staff, visitors and each other.
- Pupils enjoy being given responsibility. They talk enthusiastically about their role as monitors and of the different ways they raise money for a number of charities.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that there are adults at the school who they trust and can turn to if they are worried about anything. They have a good awareness of the different types of bullying including physical, verbal and how computers and mobile phones can be used for bullying purposes. They are also aware of other types of bullying related to gender or homophobia.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because there remain a small number of low-level incidents of disobedience. However, the school manages behaviour well and most parents who responded to the questionnaire agree.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The school has improved since the previous inspection in November 2010. Since then, leaders have been successful in improving standards in writing and developed the opportunities for

pupils to use written skills in other subjects with great success.

- Leaders have very high expectations that pupils' progress will be faster than that expected nationally. These high ambitions are shared by all staff.
- The acting headteacher is unreservedly supported by the staff and governors who share her vision for continued improvement to teaching, behaviour and achievement to become outstanding.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching because of their monitoring activities. This knowledge is used effectively in the performance management of staff. Targets set for staff are challenging, directly linked to pupil outcomes and national standards.
- School development planning is closely linked to self-evaluation and results in appropriate objectives for future improvements being set.
- Middle leaders have strong subject knowledge and are used effectively to plan and deliver improvements in their subject, for example the recent improvements in phonics teaching. However, some are new to their roles and recognise they have things to learn.
- The school's curriculum is broad and gives many opportunities for pupils of all abilities to participate. Work seen around school demonstrates the use of other subjects to develop writing. For example, in Year 6 work in geography about Australia demonstrates in-depth learning and the use of high-quality written skills to share knowledge.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils take responsibility for aspects of school life through becoming 'monitors'. The school's council is an active part of the school and has advised the Parent Teacher's Association on how to develop outdoor facilities. Music lessons are available to all and are subsidised for those eligible for the pupil premium.
- Leaders ensure that the school and its pupils play an active role in the community. Recently, pupils raised funds for a local care home and the school is used by a number of community youth groups throughout the week.
- Leaders have ensured the primary school sports funding has a positive impact on participation and well-being. The school has employed coaches to deliver a wide variety of sports to pupils in all year groups and also provide training for staff to build future capacity to sustain the provision.
- The statutory requirements for safeguarding of pupils are met.
- The local authority has provided 'light touch' support for the school. The school has taken advantage of many of the professional development opportunities available for staff and governors from both the local authority and the local educational consortium. A small number of parents feel they receive too little information about their children's progress. The school recognises it could do more to communicate with these parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is a strength of the school. Minutes of the governing body meetings demonstrate their good understanding of the standards within school and their use of data to robustly challenge school leaders to continued improvement. They evaluate the spending of the school's budget carefully, including the use of pupil premium to ensure it is used to best effect for the benefit of eligible pupils. The skills and experience of governors are used well to challenge and support leaders. For example, one governor with an educational leadership background is chair of the curriculum committee responsible for standards, and another with a business background leads the finance committee. Governors meet annually specifically to review their impact and evaluate their performance. They have clear oversight of performance management and its link to pay. Governors are committed to the safeguarding of pupils and all have been Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked to allow them to visit the school regularly to meet with staff and pupils. A number of governors are also qualified in 'safer recruitment'.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106507
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	440743

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Derek Morris
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Leck (Acting Headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 November 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 671528
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