

St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary School

New Hey Road, Upton, Wirral, Merseyside, CH49 5LE

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few pupils reach the standards of which they are capable, particularly in writing and mathematics, so that their achievement requires improvement.
- Teaching requires improvement because in the past it was not good enough to help pupils make progress consistently year on year and there continues to be weaker practise.
- Teaching does not always build quickly enough on what pupils already know to provide the challenge they need, especially the most able, to make more rapid progress.
- The quality of marking does not consistently provide pupils with information about how to improve their work or opportunities to correct and learn from their mistakes.
- From their start in Nursery, children's spoken language does not improve quickly enough and a lack of confidence and ability to explain clearly continues to hold pupils back throughout the school.
- Attention given to spelling, grammar and punctuation is not consistent so that pupils do not achieve a high enough standard in writing when they leave the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has clearly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. Actions to improve the quality of teaching are resulting in improved progress in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe there. They enjoy taking responsibilities and contributing to the life of the school.
- Governance has continued to improve since the previous inspection and governors now have the knowledge to be able to challenge the school well.
- Middle leaders are now playing their part in improving the rate of pupils' progress. Subject and aspect managers have a very clear picture of how well pupils are achieving.
- Strong leadership is ensuring this is an improving school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons or part lessons, two of which were jointly observed with the headteacher. All classes were seen at least once and a number of small group sessions were also observed.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, a representative of the local authority, members of the governing body and senior and middle leaders. Discussions were also held informally with pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Informal discussions were held with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the 11 responses made by parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own parent and pupil questionnaires undertaken recently and of the 23 staff questionnaires returned.
- Documents were examined including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour, the school's self-evaluation, pupil progress, governor training, attendance data and local authority review reports.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maureen Hints

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Michael and All Angels is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with English as a second language are below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is very high at twice the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and children of service families.
- There is an average proportion of pupils who have disabilities or special educational needs who are supported at school action and an average proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school also hosts and is responsible for the day to day management of a local authority resource base for Key Stage 1 pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection there have been a number of changes to teaching staff including the appointment of a new headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better in order to boost pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that from the time they start in Nursery and throughout the school, children are shown good ways to speak clearly so that they are better able to express their views and opinions
 - having higher expectations of what pupils, especially the most able can do and planning work that builds more rapidly on what pupils have achieved already
 - ensuring that teachers' marking is consistently good, informing pupils of their next steps and giving pupils opportunities to respond to teachers' comments and correct mistakes
 - ensuring all lessons capture the interest of all pupils, especially boys and provide challenge for pupils of all abilities.
- Raise levels of achievement particularly in writing and mathematics to ensure more pupils, particularly the most able, reach the standards of which they are capable by:
 - creating more opportunities in subjects other than English and mathematics for pupils to practise their basic skills
 - ensuring that pupils, particularly the most able have opportunities to think problems out for themselves
 - extending pupils' verbal skills and providing guidance and practise to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar in written work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils make good or better progress from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 and do not catch up sufficiently in Key Stage 2 so that standards are below those expected by the end of Year 6 in writing and mathematics.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge which are below and, for almost a half of children, well below those typically expected for their age, especially in their communication, language, personal and social development.
- Children make a slow start to their time in Nursery. They are not provided with sufficiently well-organised activities to allow them to make a good enough start to gaining early number and literacy skills. They do not make enough progress in gaining the confidence to speak to others using a range of words typically expected of children of their age.
- They make faster progress during their Reception year with activities which are well-matched to their needs and interests and with staff providing good examples of speaking. For example, a child brought a herb pot which had contained parsley and asked the teacher to smell it. The teacher took the opportunity to find out what the children knew about parsley, what it is used for and to suggest they might grow some.
- Progress from their different starting points across Key Stage 1 have not been fast enough, so that standards by the end of Year 2 have been well below the national average for several years. Recent changes in staffing to improve the quality of teaching are beginning to result in improved rates of progress, particularly in writing.
- From Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2 pupils make expected progress but not enough pupils are making more than the progress expected of them. Pupils achieve well in reading with standards which are at the level expected nationally. However, they have not made sufficient progress to make up for lost ground in mathematics and, particularly in writing so that standards in these subjects are below the national average.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, too few of the most able pupils are reaching the higher levels of attainment of which they are capable. Although a good proportion of pupils reach higher levels of attainment in reading, not enough are doing so in writing. In mathematics, the most able pupils are not challenged well enough to think problems out for themselves.
- Standards of grammar, spelling and punctuation are below those expected, reflecting the generally poor writing skills. Actions to address weaknesses in writing and to interest pupils, especially boys, to want to write are beginning to result in improvements in the quality of their written work.
- School leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching resulted in an improvement in achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013. The school's own data and inspection findings indicate pupils are making more rapid progress so that further improvements can be expected this year.
- The progress of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs is broadly in line with those expected and is improving owing to an extensive range of additional support to meet their learning needs.
- Pupils in the resource base make good progress during the short time they are usually in the school. Most arrive with very poor learning experiences and take some time to settle before they are ready to learn. However, many do well and are able to return to mainstream schools.
- The very large proportion of pupils eligible to receive the pupil premium make similar progress to others in the school though they are often coming from lower starting points. They do better in mathematics than in English. The school ensures equality of opportunity for all its pupils. In 2013, the gap in achievement between those eligible for additional funding and the rest closed due to the additional support provided which enabled differing ability groups to receive teaching appropriate to their needs. Indications are that this improvement will continue.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Changes in staffing have ensured teaching has improved recently, especially in Reception but it still requires further improvement. The quality of teaching has varied between classes so that over time pupils do not always make the progress expected of them, especially in writing.
- Teaching of mathematics is improving across the school. Staff training has been provided to improve teachers' confidence in their subject knowledge and skills. Senior and middle leaders have carried out observations and looked at work in pupils' books to check that the training has been effective. Pupils are now making good progress in mathematics. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils were given time to think and work out percentages, they were questioned to ensure understanding and suggestions were given for next steps so that they moved on rapidly.
- However, not all teachers challenge pupils well enough to help them make the best possible progress they can. Work is not always planned so that it builds quickly enough on what pupils of different abilities already know. Expectations are not always high enough for what pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve, and sometimes too much is done for them, or help given before it is needed. Although there has been a review of the curriculum to provide pupils, especially the boys, with more interesting subject matter, very occasionally lessons do not capture pupils' interest well enough and do not encourage them to want to learn.
- Senior leaders have explored ways to help pupils of differing abilities learn more effectively. Classes in Key Stage 2 are now set for ability in English and mathematics. Following an intensive training programme, teaching assistants are used very effectively to work with individuals and groups. This is particularly for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium but also sometimes with the most able pupils, so that work can be planned for them which is well matched to ensure they can make best progress. This is beginning to have good results.
- Teachers' questioning is often good in assessing what pupils know and understand but does not always focus on how to help pupils express their ideas and opinions. Consequently, pupils sometimes struggle to make their meaning clear. For example, in a meeting with a group of pupils, they were very enthusiastic about their experiences in school but found it hard to choose the words they needed to express what they wanted to say.
- Teachers' marking is considerably improved. Teachers mark work regularly and often make suggestions for how pupils could improve it. However, spellings, grammar and punctuation are not consistently corrected and pupils are not always given time and opportunity to respond to advice or practise corrections, for instance in mathematics and spelling. This is hindering progress in writing and mathematics because pupils continue to make the same mistakes. Opportunities are sometimes missed to practise basic skills in other subjects.
- Pupils in the resource base are provided with a nurturing environment and structured routines to help them settle and be prepared to learn. Work is planned for them on a very individual basis to support their social and emotional development as well as ensuring they can enjoy success in their literacy and numeracy work.
- The weakest teaching has been weeded out so that most teaching now results in improved achievement. The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is increasingly effective as teaching assistants are better used to provide support and the organisation of classes in Key Stage 2 helps teachers to plan lessons which are better matched to pupils' abilities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well around school and in lessons. This is contributing to rising standards of achievement.
- Pupils report that behaviour is good and their parents agree with them. Pupils clearly enjoy their learning and inspectors were told 'We love our lessons so that makes our behaviour good'.
- These good attitudes to learning can be seen throughout the school although pupils can 'switch-off' if they find lessons boring. Younger pupils take time to develop good learning habits but

consistent use of policies and procedures support pupils to manage their behaviour increasingly well over time.

- Behaviour logs, including charts for pupils in the resource base, are kept very well and demonstrate good relationships with parents to provide pupils with consistent messages about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- Pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very well. They are provided with increased opportunities to visit places of cultural interest linked to topics, such as a visit to Chirk Castle where they enjoyed dressing as servants.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Good relationships between staff and pupils, particularly for those who are most vulnerable, are a key factor in pupils' confidence that staff will sort out problems.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, some of which they have suggested themselves. For example, they are proud to have road safety officers, effective school council members, playground buddies, litter-pickers and house captains. As a result the school is an orderly, tidy and harmonious community.
- Bullying in all its forms is rare and inspectors were informed by pupils that 'We don't accept bullying in this school'. Occasional instances of bullying are dealt with well with parent involvement. Pupils are well-informed about how to deal with name-calling including racist bullying, nastiness and aggression but are less well informed about cyber-bullying although they did remember that a police officer had recently visited the school to talk about it.
- Pupils' attendance is around the average with some good strategies in place to liaise with parents and support them to get their children to school, for example by arranging for a member of staff or another parent to collect them.

The leadership and management are good

- Following a dip in achievement from the previous inspection, the new headteacher and her leadership team, including the governors, have taken swift action to improve the school. It is evident that the headteacher has the support of her staff and her determination and vision is reflected in a great team spirit with all staff sharing a commitment to school improvement.
- The school's leaders have tackled most of the weak teaching so that there is now no inadequate teaching and the proportion of good teaching is increasing over time. Improvements in the quality of teaching are due to frequent checks on performance, the identification of areas for staff development and an extensive professional training programme for both teachers and teaching assistants. Performance management arrangements are now much better linked to school priorities. Targets for staff are appropriately linked to incentives and frequent meetings to review pupil progress ensure teachers are held accountable for the progress of their pupils.
- The way that pupil progress data is collected and recorded has been revised and further actions are planned to ensure that teachers and school leaders are clear about how well individuals and groups of pupils are doing. Half-termly meetings between the headteacher, assistant headteacher and class teacher are contributing to early identification of any problem areas and actions are swiftly taken to deal with them.
- The responsibilities of middle leaders have been reviewed and subject leaders are now held to account for pupils' progress in their subjects. They have clear action plans to address the under-achievement and are being given time and opportunity to check on their areas of responsibility more effectively.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and topics introduced which are providing more interest and enthusiasm, especially for the boys. There is a good focus on the development of basic skills although these are not always practised sufficiently well in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The local authority has worked closely with the school to review performance, provide necessary challenge to staff and support to the headteacher, in particular to help her to deal effectively with weak teaching and this is beginning to pay dividends.

- Primary school sports funding has been used well following discussions with pupils in the school council. They requested a climbing wall which is now in place and is well-used. Additional physical education lessons are bought in from the neighbouring high school and this is helping to improve the skills of staff in St Michael and All Angels. After school sports clubs with specialist coaches are also creating opportunities to try new sports.
- The school's leaders are working hard and with increasing success to ensure that every pupil can succeed. This school includes everyone in the opportunities it provides and pupils in the resource base are accepted and treated equally. Pupil premium has been used well, especially to provide teaching assistants with the skills to provide more effective support to pupils so that the gap is beginning to close between the achievement of those supported by pupil premium and their classmates.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. Parents spoken to at the start of the school day were extremely positive about the impact the new headteacher has made with one parent commenting that 'Since this new headteacher came, it's like a wave of improvement gathering pace and growing in strength right across the school, it's wonderful'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very committed to the school and the community. Membership of the governing body has been strengthened recently and governors have attended training, both in the local authority and in the school so that they are better informed about how to judge pupil achievement and the quality of the teaching in the school. They have arrangements in place to ensure that pay awards are appropriately linked to teacher performance. They are confident that the headteacher provides them with very clear information and feel well-informed to challenge it. They ensure the headteachers' performance management targets are appropriately linked to priority areas for school improvement.
 - Governors have undertaken a skills audit and self-evaluation of their own membership. As a result governors are now clearer about areas for their own improvement and have taken steps to address these. They are using their skills appropriately to link into aspects of the school's provision so that they can receive information at first-hand.
 - Governors ensure that financial resources are used effectively and that safeguarding has the highest priority. They carry out health and safety walks regularly and monitor spending of additional funding to ensure it is used to best purpose.

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	105090
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	440713

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.

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	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Regan
Headteacher	Susan Ralph
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2010
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Fax number	0151 6770885
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