

St Monica's Catholic Primary School

Kelly Drive, Bootle, Liverpool, Merseyside, L20 9EB

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Pupils achieve extremely well. They make excellent progress throughout the school, often from below-average starting points, and consistently reach above-average standards by the end of Key Stage 2.
- An ever-increasing proportion of pupils throughout the school is working at levels above the usual expectations for their age. There is scope for some of the most able pupils to reach even higher standards in writing.
- Pupils who find learning difficult and those who qualify for extra funding through the pupil premium are well supported and achieve very well.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers and support staff constantly strive to ensure that pupils progress quickly and that lessons are interesting and fun.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They become highly motivated, eager learners, well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- The rich curriculum enables pupils of all ages to become fully engaged in successful learning. Pupils are mature and confident, play a full part in school life and work together happily and productively.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. They are well mannered caring individuals who speak with warmth and pride about their school.
- Pupils are confident that the school keeps them safe. They know that the adults care for them. Their parents overwhelmingly agree that the school provides a safe place for their children.
- The headteacher leads with clarity and with a passion that is shared by all. He leads an extremely effective team and has the wholehearted support of all his staff.
- Senior and middle leaders contribute extremely well to checking on and improving pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.
- Governors provide outstanding support. They are very well informed; they are actively involved in the school's daily life; they are very supportive; and are also well able to hold the school fully to account.
- St Monica's provides a welcoming, caring environment for its pupils. It daily provides a rich, stimulating climate for learning and life experiences. It truly lives its Catholic mission in the community.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes at least once, making a total of 19 observations. One observation was observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 2, 3 and 6 and discussed the books they enjoyed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils, and observed pupils at playtimes.
- Account was taken of 29 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), 144 responses to the questionnaire issued by school on the day the school was notified of the inspection, one letter from a parent and questionnaires returned by the staff of the school.
- Inspectors looked at the work of the school and examined a range of documents including, the school's view of its own performance, information about the progress of pupils, attendance information, safeguarding requirements and records relating to the appraisal of teachers.

Inspection team

Bernard Dorgan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christine Howard	Additional Inspector
Diane Auton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Monica's is significantly larger than an average-sized primary school.
- It is a two-form entry school and has a part-time Nursery. The school provides a breakfast club.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is in line with other schools nationally. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just below that of other schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is above the national average. This is extra funding is for 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 proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is significantly below that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In writing, increase the proportion of pupils, especially the most able, attaining at the higher levels.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Achievement across the school is outstanding.
- Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below those that are typical for their age and leave school at the end of Year 6 with attainment that is consistently at least above the national average.
- In 2013, the proportion of pupils who made the expected amount of progress was at least in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who made more than expected progress was higher than the national average.
- Children make an excellent start to their school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the Nursery class, they are happy, comfortable and work well together. This continues when they move into Reception. They chat confidently with adults who make sure that they really understand their learning. The clear focus provided by the well-organised teachers who work together as a team, along with generous numbers of support staff means that they make outstanding progress in the learning of their basic skills. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning because they are highly motivated and eager to learn.
- Strong progress continues throughout Year 1 and Year 2, which means that by the end of Year 2 the attainment of pupils is above the national average, significantly so in reading and writing. In 2013, the proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the nationally expected standard in the phonics screening check was high compared with the national average. These pupils, now in Year 2, use their excellent listening skills and their well developed understanding of the sounds that letters make to good effect. This was seen during the inspection when they made their obviously enjoyable attempts at spelling difficult words.
- The school has made a considerable investment of resources to support pupils during their early years in school. This has had a significant impact and is contributing to pupils' exceptional progress as they move through the school.
- Pupils carry on achieving very well from Year 3 to Year 6, where progress from their starting points is consistently good or better in all year groups. There is an ever increasing proportion of pupils who are working at higher levels than would be expected. There is further scope for more of the most able pupils to achieve the higher levels in writing.
- An increasing proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making better than expected progress. This is because of the school's ability to quickly identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind and the impact of the many support programmes for these pupils, which includes intensive teaching to support accelerated learning every day.
- In Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, was a bit behind that of other pupils in the school in writing and in reading. There was no gap in mathematics. The school's records for pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium across the school in the current year, show that there are no significant differences between their achievement and that of other pupils in the school. This is the direct result of the school's effective targeting of pupil premium funding to ensure teaching that is clearly focussed on the needs of these pupils. This demonstrates the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- Pupils love reading and are keen to say so. They look forward to the regular, weekly visits to the school library. Pupils show enthusiasm for, and interest in, the books that they read and are fluent and confident in their approach to the text. They are able to discuss their reading and enjoyment from across a wide range of both fiction and non-fiction. They are well supported in school. By the time they leave Year 6 they are mature, competent readers.
- Pupils achieve extremely well across a wide range of subjects, including geography and history. In Year 5, as part of their topic work on Ancient Greece, pupils used their writing skills to make a diary entry from the perspective of a combatant. Presentation of their work in books and around

the school is of a high standard, reflecting the high expectations across the school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching over time across the school is outstanding and teachers work hard to create an environment which encourages pupils to be enthusiastic to learn. They work tirelessly to engage all pupils, making learning enjoyable and effectively cater for each individual's needs. For example, pupils spoke warmly about the writing activity they did in Year 2 about the 'Emperors' New Clothes', which they found really funny!
- A dedicated teaching team of teachers and teaching assistants works to ensure that every pupil travels towards their full potential. Teachers know their pupils very well and are good role models.
- Well-established routines in classes contribute to the efficient teaching and learning, for example, Year 6 pupils change activities seamlessly without a second being wasted.
- A strong feature of teaching is the positive, respectful relationships that exist within the classrooms. Pupils enjoy the work set for them and say that they appreciate the efforts teachers make to ensure learning is both interesting and enjoyable.
- Teachers plan effectively to ensure that learning builds strongly upon what pupils already know. They keep detailed records of the progress their pupils make and constantly reflect in order to improve their learning.
- Teachers constantly check that pupils understand and act quickly to clear up any difficulties or misunderstandings in a supportive way so that pupils do not become anxious or concerned.
- Pupils are set challenging targets, which they understand, and they can talk about how good their work is and what they need to do to improve it.
- Pupils' work is marked frequently and with great care and attention. They are well informed about how to take steps to improve it.
- Teaching assistants play an effective part in supporting the learning of all pupils, often working with the teacher as a team. Some pupils receive individual support from teaching assistants and this helps them to make accelerated progress.
- The generous numbers of teaching and support staff means that the school is able to organise the learning, particularly in English and mathematics, so that pupils' needs can be more fully met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are courteous and have extremely positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour in lessons and around the school at all times is exemplary. In class, pupils need the minimum of direction because they know and understand the routines. They are attentive, hard-working and they apply themselves extremely well, being eager to learn. This excellent conduct in lessons contributes strongly to their successful learning. St Monica's is a well ordered and calm place to be and provides a stimulating environment that leads to effective learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel very secure in school. They feel that this is a place where they are cared for and protected. They have confidence that the adults will always be there for them if they have a problem. Effective systems exist to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Pupils are mature, polite and are overwhelmingly positive about their school. Comments from parents and their responses on Parent View also indicate the high confidence they have in the care that the school provides.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of different forms of bullying, including prejudice-based

bullying and cyber-bullying. They say that there is no bullying and are confident that any incidents would be dealt with effectively. Pupils talk openly about, 'Our Safe School'; a programme the school uses to promote feeling safe, happy and being loved.

- Many opportunities exist for pupils to take on responsibilities, for example, older pupils take care of younger ones in school, a responsibility they take seriously.
- Pupils who are potentially vulnerable, including those who have health, social, emotional or medical needs, are supported very well. The school provides support for pupils and families whose circumstances might make them vulnerable and works effectively with external agencies to help them.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now in line with the national average. This reflects the effect of a range of actions put into place by the school to improve and sustain attendance rates.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's vision, commitment and drive for improvement are at the heart of the school. He is passionate about the pupils, the community of St Monica's and its influence in the wider community. He is ably supported by senior and middle leaders. The governing body provides strong established support and challenge. Leaders and managers have ensured a shared view of the school's future throughout the whole school community, and one which is evidenced in daily life. The headteacher successfully communicates the vision throughout the community. Everyone is ambitious for the pupils in this school.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. There is strong, well-organised teamwork, effective assessment and successful involvement of parents and families.
- The school's view of its own performance is detailed and accurate, and is honest in the assessment of what needs to be done. From this has developed a school improvement plan that provides the direction in which the school needs to move. There are clear targets, with timescales and how the impact is to be measured. This has resulted in effective action, which has led to improvements in pupils' achievement. Because of this, the school has the capacity to develop its strengths even further.
- Teaching is checked continuously and systematically and this is key to the excellent quality of teaching across the school. Timely, purposeful and professional training is provided to all staff so that their skills can be improved. Within school, teachers act as mentors and coaches to less-experienced staff to help them to become skilled professionals.
- The management of teachers' performance is through a rigorous appraisal process that has ambitious objectives linked to the school's priorities.
- The broad curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn through topics and much enrichment takes place with educational visits and visitors contributing to the pupils' experiences. Further enrichment takes place through the provision of an excellent range of well-attended school clubs. As in other areas of the development of the school, it is forward thinking in its planning for the new 2014 curriculum so that it will be ready to fulfil the new requirements.
- The curriculum provides rich spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences which abound throughout, for example, Rosa Parks was used as a role model for pupils to broaden their understanding of current issues exploring and reflecting diversity.
- The school encourages pupils to be reflective about beliefs, values and profound aspects of human experience, enabling them to develop curiosity and understanding in their learning journeys through life. It nurtures and develops thoughtful young people.
- There are well established links with other parts of the world. The school hosts visitors from charities in Brazil and Africa, as well as teachers from Spain and China. This is part of the school's approach to helping pupils gain a cultural understanding of the international community.
- There is effective use of the primary sports funding, part of which is being used to improve attendance by providing additional sports clubs on Mondays and Fridays. Sports coaches lead

physical education lessons, thus providing ongoing training to staff.

- The support the school receives from the local authority is light touch.
- The well-organised breakfast club gives pupils an excellent start to the day with many opportunities to learn in a fun way.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is totally committed to supporting and improving the school. Governors are extremely well informed and regularly receive very detailed information from the headteacher about the school's performance. They hold the senior leadership robustly to account within a mutually respectful, professional relationship and will not hold back from asking questions if they need further clarification or explanations of any issues. They also seek external verification of school performance to inform their views further. The governors have a deep understanding of the school and the community it serves. There is stability within the governing body with many of them coming from the locality. They know their school well and share the vision and ambition of their headteacher. They have a clear understanding of the many strengths that the school has and work resolutely to address areas in need of improvement. They are well organised into committees, such as the performance and attainment committee, which ensures a strong focus on standards in the school. The Chair of the Governing Body is a national leader of governance. The governors have a clear understanding of how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it is having on pupils. They speak passionately and fondly of the school and see it as an oasis for pupils and adults alike. As one of them said, 'It gets in your blood.' They have developed in their role in recent years, adapting to the challenges of a changing world. Governors are clear about the link between the appraisal objectives of teachers and any increases in salary and have an agreed policy in place to underpin its implementation. Their commitment to safeguarding ensures that policies and procedures are of a high standard and fully in place.

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	104905
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	440708

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	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Foster
Headteacher	Paul Kinsella
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2011
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