

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Belgrave Avenue, Congleton, CW12 1HT

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2014

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.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in all subjects. The results achieved by pupils are consistently above the national average.
- Teaching is at least good across the school and some is outstanding. Teachers know their pupils well and plan interesting lessons for them.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress both academically and personally.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make the same good progress as other pupils in school.
- Pupils behave well. They work hard, enjoy learning and want to do well.
- Pupils' safety is good. The school looks after pupils well, and teaches them how to stay safe.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They develop well as thoughtful, responsible young people.
- The recently appointed headteacher has made a very positive impact on the school and on pupils' achievement in a short time.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and its leaders.
- Governors are effective at both supporting and challenging school leaders to improve the school further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not consistently outstanding to result in outstanding achievement for pupils.
- Pupils do not get regular chances to improve their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, or to use new technologies.
- Sometimes the school's most able pupils are not given work which is hard enough.
- Many leadership roles are concentrated on a small number of individuals.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 part-lessons, three of which were jointly observed with the headteacher. All classes and teachers were seen. Inspectors attended an assembly, listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, school leaders and governors. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents at the start of each day of the inspection. They looked at the 46 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, at the school's own recent survey of parents' views and at 20 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at documents including the school's review of its own performance, its plans for improvement, records of the quality of teaching, school information on the progress of pupils and at nationally published results. Inspectors also looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and at how the school keeps pupils safe.

Inspection team

Michael Phipps, 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 pupils eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is lower than average. The proportion who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also lower than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2013 following a period of some leadership instability, during which two successive part-time interim headteachers led the school. A number of teachers are new to the school. The Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further by making sure that:
 - pupils regularly have the chance to improve their ICT skills and to use new technologies in a number of subjects
 - the school's most-able pupils are consistently given work in all subjects that is sufficiently difficult to challenge them so they make faster progress
 - staff have the opportunity to observe outstanding teaching in order to improve their own practice to raise pupils' achievement further.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - sharing leadership roles more widely across the school
 - developing more fully the school's future leaders.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school in the Reception Year with skills slightly below those expected for their age, especially in reading, communication and language. By the time they leave school in Year 6 their standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average.
- Lesson observations and checks of pupils' work confirm that pupils are making good progress over time in all subjects and year groups.
- Children get off to a good start in Reception. They settle in quickly and are well taught. This means they make good progress and enter Key Stage 1 with standards that are, for most children, almost in line with national averages.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. Their standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 are all above average.
- Pupils develop their writing skills well. Pupils have chances to write at length for different purposes and audiences across a number of subjects. As a result, pupils' standards of writing by Year 6 are well-above average.
- Pupils learn to read successfully. Their understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is rapidly improving because of recent changes in how phonics is taught. Some slower progress in reading in Key Stage 2 recently was quickly corrected. Pupils' standards of reading by Year 6 are above average. Pupils enjoy reading, and are encouraged to read regularly at home. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their favourite books and authors.
- Pupils develop their mathematical skills well. The proportion of pupils making the progress expected of them in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is consistently higher than average.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar good progress to other pupils. This is because they are taught well and receive good support from teaching assistants.
- Funds from the pupil premium are spent effectively on in-class support, on a range of extra help for pupils who may be falling behind in literacy or numeracy, and on subsidising visits and activities for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. There were too few supported pupils in 2013 to comment on their attainment without identifying them, but across the school they make good progress that is in line with, or above, that of other pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the highest levels of attainment at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is above average. However, some of the school's most able pupils make slightly slower progress than other pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- All teaching is typically at least good, and some is outstanding.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. In a guided reading lesson, for instance, inspectors saw Year 6 pupils reading challenging books by authors including Charles Dickens and William Golding and they did so with enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- Pupils are usually provided with tasks of the right level for them. In a mathematics lesson, for example, Year 3 pupils made outstanding progress in subtraction because different tasks were provided for different ability groups. Their understanding and progress were checked throughout the lesson and tasks were adapted to suit their needs.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive. In a phonics lesson, for instance, Reception-aged children made rapid progress because they were confident and happy to contribute. Adults praised and encouraged children regularly, so they were keen to take part in the interesting and challenging activities.
- Most teachers' marking is detailed and frequent. It gives pupils a clear idea of the next steps they should take to improve their work. Pupils have the chance to respond to this marking in the

recently introduced 'Fix-it time' each morning.

- There are limited opportunities for pupils to improve their ICT skills across the curriculum or to use new technologies to support their learning in different subjects.
- In some subjects the school's most able pupils are not consistently given work that stretches them or makes them think for themselves. These pupils are well challenged in mathematics, for example, but not so well in religious education, science or in topic work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in class and around the school. They are polite, respectful and friendly towards adults, visitors and each other.
- Attitudes to learning are good. Pupils work hard and enjoy answering questions and offering their opinions. Disruption to learning caused by poor behaviour is very rare.
- Pupils enjoy school. They understand the importance of good behaviour and doing well at school. They told inspectors the school is getting better. One said, 'I've learned a lot more than last year. My grades are now rocketing up.'
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are well looked after and feel safe in school. There is very little bullying and pupils are confident that, if it did happen, it would be stopped as soon as they told an adult. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They understand, for example, the potential dangers of using the internet, and how to stay safe on the roads.
- Racist incidents are very rare.
- All parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire said the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved, and that their children are well looked after, feel safe and are happy.
- The number of pupil exclusions is very low.
- Attendance is consistently above the national average.
- Pupils' behaviour is not outstanding because sometimes, when they are not closely supervised, for example at break times and lunchtimes in the playground, some pupils become excitable and cause minor incidents of misbehaviour which can upset others.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher, effectively supported by a small leadership team, has made a very positive impact on the school, and on pupils' achievement, in the relatively short time since her appointment. She has a very clear idea of how she wants to improve the school, and has quickly gained the confidence of pupils, staff and parents.
- School leaders frequently check the quality of teaching, planning and marking. Systems for managing teachers' performance are robust. Teachers' targets are based on pupils' progress. Underperformance in teaching is tackled rigorously. This clear focus means the quality of teaching is improving.
- School leaders regularly check the progress made by pupils. Teachers are held to account for the progress of the pupils they teach. If a pupil starts to fall behind, effective extra help is quickly given.
- The school's plans for improvement concentrate on the right areas. They are based on an honest and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The school provides pupils with a good range of subjects, topics, visits, clubs and experiences which they find interesting. This helps pupils to enjoy school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have many planned chances, including assemblies, to reflect on their beliefs, values and experiences. They have a good understanding of right and wrong. As a result, they develop well as thoughtful, responsible individuals. They have many chances to take on positions of responsibility such as volunteering

to help the poor and elderly, environmental work and supporting charities.

- Extra primary sport funding is spent on teaching assistants to improve pupils' learning in sports, on training each member of staff to become a lead professional in a particular sport, and on membership of the local sports partnership. This has resulted in a wider range of sports available for pupils, more opportunities to take part in competitions and in a higher pupil participation rate in sports.
- School leaders carefully analyse the impact of pupil premium funding. This means they have a very clear idea of what spending is most effective. This has successfully closed any gaps in achievement between supported pupils and others in school. The school is committed to equality of opportunity and to ensuring that every child reaches his or her full potential.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and its leaders. Many commented on the improvements to the school since the appointment of the new headteacher.
- The school receives light-touch support from the local authority. It has benefited from well-targeted support and advice from its external improvement partner.
- At present the headteacher and the deputy headteacher carry out many leadership roles. This limits the chances for other potential future leaders in the school to develop their leadership skills and experience.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are ambitious to see the school improve further. Many are frequent visitors to the school, so they get first-hand experience of the life of the school, including the quality of teaching. They also commission reports from the school's improvement partner to give an independent view on how well the school is doing. They understand how teachers' performance is managed, and how any underperformance is tackled. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They contribute well to identifying priorities for improvement and to making sure that plans to improve the school are effective. They are proficient in understanding what data on pupils' performance tell them about how well the school is doing compared to others nationally. This means they are increasingly able to hold school leaders to account to improve the school further. Governors oversee the school's budget well and understand how extra funding, for example from the pupil premium, is spent, and with what effect. They have a good range of skills and are keen to extend their expertise, and many have undertaken further training.

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	111335
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	439552

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	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Brundrett
Headteacher	Sacha Humphries
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2009
Telephone number	01260 274690
Fax number	NA
Email address	admin@stmarysrcongleton.cheshire.sch.uk

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