

# St Marie's Catholic Primary School

Bigdale Drive, Northwood, Kirkby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L33 6XL

**Inspection dates** 2–3 April 2014

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2013 were below average and progress in writing was slow.
- The quality of teaching is not always good enough which slows down pupils' progress, particularly that of the most able.
- Not enough pupils develop their basic literacy skills and there are weaknesses in their writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent. Pupils' work is not routinely checked to see if pupils act on advice for improvement.
- Information about pupils' progress is not used effectively to set work which is challenging enough; especially for the most able pupils and in writing.
- The leadership team, including governors, is not as effective as it could be because checks on how well pupils are doing in their work are not regular enough and do not always result in speedy improvements.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors accurately identify weaker areas and are improving pupils' standards and their attendance.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They enjoy learning and achieve well from overall starting points that are below those expected for their age.
- Progress in reading and mathematics is improving and pupils are now reaching average standards by the end of Year 6.
- The school is a vibrant and welcoming place. Pupils take pride in their contributions to high quality displays in classes and around school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are very polite and get on well together. They are well turned out in their uniforms and are a credit to their families and their school.
- Many sporting and cultural activities promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They observed 15 lessons and part lessons including one observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and in the playgrounds.
- Discussions were held with pupils, two members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and reviewed their work.
- Inspectors examined a number of documents, including: the school's plan for further improvements; its use of sport funding and the pupil premium; records of governing body meetings; arrangements for keeping pupils safe and information about the standards and progress of pupils across the school.
- The views of parents were taken into account by speaking to some parents as they brought their children to school and looking at their response to the school's questionnaire about before-school care and additional activities. There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View survey to take into account.
- Staff views were evaluated by analysing questionnaires completed by 25 staff and in discussions held with staff throughout the inspection.

## Inspection team

Marie Cordey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Julie Webster

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is of average size.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for additional government funding, known as the pupil premium, is high. (The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- There is a relatively high turnover of pupils, with an above average number joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times.
- In 2013, the school met the governments' current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The governing body manages before-school care in the school.

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

- Ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better to improve pupils' rate of progress and raise standards in English and mathematics by:
  - having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and letting pupils know what those expectations are
  - ensuring work is challenging enough to encourage pupils to try their hardest, especially for the most able
  - making better use of information about pupils' work to set work at a higher level and to make up any gaps in their knowledge
  - emphasising the teaching of basic skills especially in writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling
  - improving the quality of marking so that pupils act on advice to improve their work which is then checked by teachers.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - making systems to check pupils' progress from Year 1 to Year 6 simpler and more straightforward
  - checking pupils' progress more regularly, and at least half termly, and acting quickly if any pupils are underachieving
  - increasing training for governors in evaluating pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching to involve them more effectively in evaluating the school's performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because standards have been below average for a number of years and progress in writing is slow.
- Standards in the national tests for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 were below average in English and mathematics. Pupils made expected progress, but not better than this, from their below average starting points in Year 1.
- Standards by the end of Year 2 have risen and are now average in reading and mathematics, but their progress is no better than expected because these pupils' starting points are similar to those typical for their age. Pupils' knowledge about the sounds that letters make and their ability to link them to words is improving especially for boys as shown by the results in the Year 1 national phonics screening check.
- The standards of pupils in writing in 2013 were affected by a significant number of pupils who joined the school in Year 6 with low standards in writing. Careful support for these pupils enabled them to make up for some gaps in knowledge so that they made expected progress.
- Improvements to teaching have begun to make an impact on raising pupils' standards, especially in reading. Pupils' standards in reading and mathematics are now similar to the national average by the end of Year 6, although writing is still below average.
- There is still much to do, however. The most able pupils are still not reaching the higher levels of which they are capable, in many cases, and weaknesses in basic literacy hamper pupils' achievement in writing.
- The standards of pupils with special educational needs are below average but they make similar expected progress as the other pupils in school because of careful and appropriate support.
- The standards and progress of pupils who receive the pupil premium funding are similar to those of other pupils in school in reading, writing and mathematics. There is no gap between the achievement and performance of pupils eligible for free school meals and that of other pupils. Good support boosts their confidence and progress.
- Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development that are typically below those for their age. In the last two years, good teaching has prompted good progress so that by the time they start Year 1 their standards are similar to those expected for children of their age. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well, especially in the Nursery Year, but this rate of progress is not yet maintained in Key Stages 1 and 2.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because over time there has not been enough good teaching to accelerate pupils' progress and to raise their standards from below average. Not all lessons are planned well enough to capture pupils' interest and to encourage them to work effectively rather than diligently.
- Information about pupils' progress is not used well enough to plan work that challenges pupils to achieve more, that stretches the most able or helps all pupils to make up for lost ground, especially in writing.
- A good focus on building pupils' confidence and self-reliance has led to a willingness and eagerness to learn. Positive relationships between pupils and staff produce a harmonious working atmosphere. This is not always built on sufficiently to stimulate better teaching and higher expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- On occasions, explanations of what is expected of pupils are unclear and because they are not sure of what they have to do, pupils waste time before getting on with their work.
- Teaching assistants mostly provide closely focused support to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, especially those with special educational needs. Their impact is reduced when they are not actively supporting pupils, such as when the teacher is introducing the lesson

activities.

- A focus on improving mathematics and reading over recent years has led to improvements in pupils' standards in both subjects. Writing has been a priority for the past year but standards are not rising quickly enough. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are not identified in time to raise pupils' standards. Skills in writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling are weak and hold back pupils' achievement in other subjects.
- Pupils' work in lessons is checked by teachers and teaching assistants who establish pupils' understanding through careful questioning and discussion. Marking is regular and detailed. However, the guidance given is not always acted upon and this is not checked, with the result that teachers and pupils are not sufficiently aware of any misunderstandings or gaps in knowledge.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage receive good teaching. Their curiosity and enthusiasm are harnessed straight away in the Nursery Year and children become keen to look at books, make marks, paint and speak in sentences.
- Children enjoy the many activities indoors and outdoors that are deliberately planned to capture their interest as well as improve their development. Children rise to the high expectations of staff and thoroughly enjoy their time in the setting.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They want to learn because leaders and governors deliberately celebrate each individual pupil and create a warm and welcoming school.
- Pupils are unfailingly polite. They get on well with each other because they are encouraged to treat others as they want to be treated themselves. Their spiritual development is particularly good and pupils routinely think and reflect about people from different backgrounds and those who are less fortunate than they are.
- Pupils are pleased and proud to take on responsibilities. School councillors canvass other pupils' opinions about how to improve their school, knowing that their views are listened to and taken seriously by the school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are well-supervised at break times and there are very few minor accidents such as falling over or being hit by a ball.
- Pupils understand about different types of bullying and say that it does not happen at their school because that would be unfair. They are keen to say that bullying connected to race and religion does not happen because it is good to have a world where lots of different people live.
- Close relationships with parents have supported consistent improvements in attendance year-on-year. Overall and over time it is average and currently it is above average. Parents and their children realise the importance of attending school regularly.
- All parents who gave their views felt that their children were well looked after, well-behaved and safe in the school.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn to 'take turns' and to share because that is 'good manners'. They are praised and encouraged and this gives them confidence. Children enjoy playing together but also learn to persevere and play and learn on their own.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because checks on the quality of teaching have not been robust enough to maintain the good quality of teaching seen at the last inspection and so ensure that pupils throughout the school make good progress.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are strongly committed to improve the school. They know what needs to be done to raise pupils' standards and have already arrested a decline in mathematics.
- The school has a wealth of information on pupils' progress but it is too detailed and not well-

focused on identifying how different groups such as the most able can be helped to make faster progress.

- Information gathered from lesson observations and evaluations of pupils' work help to set performance management targets for the good progress of pupils and this is linked to teachers' progress up the pay scale. However, these targets are not yet specific enough, especially in writing, to hold staff more accountable for the performance of pupils.
- All staff share the leaders' drive to improve the school and are keen to share best practice in teaching to improve their own practice. Their positive views in the staff questionnaires demonstrate their support for leadership and their belief in the good behaviour of pupils. Middle leaders are involved in planning strategies with senior leaders to improve the school although these plans are not precisely targeted enough to secure good progress.
- The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is reflected in the similar progress and standards of pupil in receipt of the pupil premium funding.
- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and staff are well trained to care for the children. Good teaching leads to positive outcomes for children.
- Pupils enjoy learning in a wide range of subjects. Their good work in subjects such as history, physical education and art widens their knowledge and develops their interests. Numeracy skills have improved because they have been emphasised not just in mathematics but also in many other subjects. This is not yet the case in literacy and pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling lag behind their basic skills in numeracy.
- The additional primary school sport funding is used well to develop pupils' physical education, extend pupils' participation in competitions and their knowledge of how to live healthily.
- The local authority provides regular support. Specific actions to improve standards in mathematics and reading in recent years have helped to raise standards. Currently, local authority support is helping the school focus on improving pupils' progress in writing.
- Partnerships in the Kirkby collaborative of schools, with parents and with the local church and other religious communities benefit pupils' good spiritual, social, cultural and moral development as well as their attendance and the varied curriculum.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is proud to be associated with the school and the community and works hard to support pupils' personal and academic development. Governors have contributed well to the pupils' good behaviour and safety. They have been instrumental in working with the headteacher to establish procedures to link teachers' performance and pay progression.
  - Governors are knowledgeable about pupils' progress and their standards, although training in evaluating the finer points in pupils' achievement is limited. They are regularly involved in observing the work of the school including lesson observations and they would welcome further training to secure their knowledge about the specific impact of teaching on pupils' progress.
  - Governors have undertaken required statutory training. They manage the school's finances effectively, including the additional primary school sport funding and the pupil premium, and appreciate how the efficient use of finances can benefit pupils' achievement.
  - The governing body fulfils its duties in securing the safeguarding of pupils.

## 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>	104466
<b>Local authority</b>	Knowsley
<b>Inspection number</b>	439509

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	246
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr W Mushrow
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs P Cooney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 February 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 477 8480
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