

# Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Wellington Street, Grimsby, Lincolnshire, DN32 7JX

**Inspection dates** 29–30 April 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- In 2013, pupils' attainment in Year 2 and 6 in reading, writing and mathematics was too low given their starting points. Over time, pupils' progress has been too slow.
- Teaching is improving but it is not yet good enough to ensure pupils make consistently good progress and to raise standards quickly, particularly in writing.
- Achievement in writing, especially in Years 3 and 4 remains inadequate and it requires improvement in mathematics.
- Expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve are not always high enough to ensure they achieve well, particularly in mathematics.
- A minority of pupils, particularly the boys in Year 4, do not display good attitudes to their learning, especially where lessons fail to capture their interest. As a result, behaviour requires improvement.
- Attendance is below average and a minority of pupils arrive late for school too often.
- The roles of middle leaders are not fully developed. They do not check carefully enough how well pupils are achieving in their areas of responsibility or how well they are taught.
- The governing body does not have robust procedures for checking how well the school uses the pupil premium. As a result, pupils eligible for this funding do not do well enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since the appointment of the Head of School and Executive Headteacher, the school is improving quickly. There are examples of good teaching and much better achievement.
- Leaders have focused on improving pupils' reading. Pupils now achieve well in reading.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress.
- Teaching in Year 2 and 6 is good. Pupils in these year groups are making good progress making up for their previous underachievement and gaps in their skills and knowledge.
- School procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance are good. Leaders are focussed on the correct priorities, providing a firm foundation for school improvement.
- The school keeps pupils safe and secure.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or small-group activities, of which five were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders, school staff and two representatives from the academy trust.
- There were too few responses to the online survey (Parent View) for inspectors to consider, but inspectors took account of a recent school survey.
- Inspectors took account of the 20 inspection questionnaires returned by members of the school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at progress data, work in pupils' books, performance management information, records relating to behaviour and safety, as well as documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Jim Alexander, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sue Twaits

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.*

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for children who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background is growing and is now average.
- In July 2013, the school did not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school converted to become a sponsor-led academy in December 2012.
- The academy is part of the Northern Lincolnshire Catholic Academy Trust (NoLCAT) who appointed an executive headteacher (Mrs Pollard) from January 2014. She was previously the headteacher of St Joseph's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy and is now executive headteacher of both academies.
- In September 2013, a new Head of School was seconded from NoLCAT and this position was made permanent in December 2013. New subject leaders for English and mathematics have also been appointed. The school also runs a daily breakfast club.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better, so that pupils make at least good progress in mathematics and in writing, particularly in Years 3 and 4, and reach the standards they are capable of by the end of Year 6 by:
  - raising expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve and by planning activities that consistently challenge them, particularly in mathematics
  - ensuring a consistent whole-school approach to developing pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills and providing pupils with more opportunities to write at length
  - improving the quality of marking so pupils know what they have to do to make their work better and then act quickly upon that advice
  - making sure that activities are interesting enough to capture and hold pupils' attention in their work, so that their attitudes to learning and behaviour are always good, particularly the boys in Year 4
  - planning activities that enable pupils who are supported by the pupil premium to make good progress, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Further improve the impact of leadership and management by:
  - eradicating the very small remnant of inadequate teaching in lower Key Stage 2, particularly in writing
  - developing the role of middle leaders to monitor and evaluate the impact of achievement in

their subjects by using data more effectively, so that they have a good understanding of how well pupils achieve and how well they are taught, in their areas of responsibility

- working with parents to ensure recent improvements in pupils' attendance and punctuality continue, so that attendance is good, pupils are rarely late for school and learning time is not missed
- making sure the governing body develop robust procedures for checking the effectiveness of the school's use of the pupil premium funding.

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

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was exceptionally low in 2013. From their starting points, pupils' progress over time has been inadequate. This is the result of previous weak teaching and low expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, too many pupils have failed to make the expected rate of progress or reach the levels of attainment expected for their age by the end of Year 6. Although improving, achievement remains inadequate because progress in writing is still too slow. This is particularly the case in writing in Years 3 and 4 and for boys in these year groups.
- Since September 2013, however, the overall quality of teaching has improved and is having a discernible impact on pupils' learning. Most pupils are displaying much better attitudes to their work in lessons and the majority are attending school more regularly. This is helping pupils to enjoy school more and make better progress.
- Achievement in reading, for example, has improved and is now good. Pupils in Year 1 are using what they know about letters and the sounds they make to help them enjoy reading. They read a range of books with increased confidence. Those pupils who did not read as well as expected in the national reading check in Year 1 in 2013, have been given effective additional support. This is helping the majority to catch up well.
- Across the school, pupils are reading more frequently in small groups and one-to-one with adults. Staff are better trained to spot where pupils struggle and offer the right support to help them succeed. As a result, progress in reading for the majority of pupils is now good.
- Progress in mathematics is no longer inadequate, but requires further improvement to be good. There remain too many examples where the most able pupils are given work that is too easy, which limits the progress they make.
- Improvements in writing are not yet as evident and progress remains too slow. Pupils' poor writing skills still hinder their progress in this subject, especially where teaching is not yet good enough. The approach to helping pupils improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar is not consistent enough across the school and pupils are not yet provided with enough opportunities to write at length. As a result, boys' progress in writing, in particular, remains particularly weak in Years 3 and 4; there are too many basic errors that are not quickly picked up.
- Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills, knowledge and understanding that are lower than those typically expected for their age. As a result of improved teaching, more children are now making better progress and many are now reaching a good level of development by the time they start Year 1. However, a small minority of children are still over reliant on adult help. Leaders are aware of the need to continue to foster children's independence in their learning.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are now receiving much better help and support in class and in small groups. Their progress is no longer inadequate; many are now making expected progress. Even so, too few are making better than expected progress.
- The increasing proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, many of whom speak English as an additional language, receives good support. They are helped to settle quickly and are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress in their reading so that pupils currently in Year 6 are now only a few months behind others in their class. However, progress in mathematics is not yet good enough and this group of pupils are eight months behind others. Progress in writing remains too slow and pupils are 12 months behind others in their class. Activities are not planned well enough to meet eligible pupils' needs in writing and mathematics.
- As a result of the inadequate achievement made by pupils, the school has not promoted equality of opportunity well enough over time. However, recent improvements in the way senior leaders meet regularly with teachers to discuss pupils' progress, mean that pupils who are falling behind are now identified more quickly and progress for most pupils is speeding up.

## **The quality of teaching**

## **requires improvement**

- Although teaching is improving, it still requires improvement because its impact on pupils' achievement is not yet consistently good across the school, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Inconsistencies in the approach to the teaching of writing mean that pupils' progress is too variable and overall is too slow. For example, pupils are well taught in Years 2 and 6, but teaching in Years 3 and 4 is weak. Pupils are not given enough opportunity to write at length and put into practise their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. Simple spelling mistakes are not always corrected and so errors continue.
- Improvements to the teaching of mathematics are already making a positive difference to how well pupils apply what they are learning to a range of problem-solving activities. However, the most able pupils are given work that is far too easy for them. They finish quickly and then have to wait for others to catch up. This is not a good use of their time and limits the progress they make.
- The teaching of reading has improved considerably and the training provided for teachers and support staff is proving beneficial. Adults listen carefully to see if pupils understand what they are reading. Teachers ask thought-provoking questions to consolidate pupils' learning and extend their understanding and so the pupils now make good progress.
- The quality of marking is improving but remains variable; while the majority of teachers write positive comments to explain to pupils how to improve their work, not all pupils follow up this advice quickly.
- Teachers are planning much more interesting lessons. Pupils say that 'teachers are making our lessons more fun'. An example of this was observed in Year 2 science, where pupils demonstrated good understanding of what plants needed to grow. Teachers are developing better ways to involve boys in their work, particularly with their writing. However, some lessons still fail to capture pupils' interests well enough, particularly the boys in Year 4, and then their attitudes to work can slip and progress slows.
- The school has a large number of teaching assistants. These members of staff often make a valuable contribution to helping pupils' learning.

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

## **requires improvement**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- This is because pupils' attitudes to learning are not as good as they could be in every lesson, especially for some boys. Most pupils show respect for one another and this allows an increasing number of lessons to move on without interruption. However, when activities are not interesting enough to capture pupils' attention, some can become restless or silly and then waste learning time.
- Behaviour at playtime and lunchtime is usually good and older pupils enjoy the responsibility of looking after younger pupils. Pupils are smartly dressed and classrooms kept tidy. The presentation of work in pupils' books is improving and is now good in a growing number of classes.
- While attendance is improving quickly, it remains below average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is also falling rapidly, but remains above average. School leaders are working effectively with parents to ensure most pupils now arrive to school on time. However, a minority still arrive late for lessons and miss learning time.
- Pupils are enjoying the increasing number of sporting activities available to take part in and all pupils in Year 4 are now learning the violin and the Year 5 violin assembly also sounded amazing!
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are helped to settle quickly, develop positive relationships with adults and enjoy playing and learning with friends.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Leaders respond quickly to any concerns raised regarding pupils' safety. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example, when using the internet.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about different forms of bullying and were keen to tell inspectors that incidents are now rare. They say that adults help them resolve problems quickly.
- Pupils enjoy attending the breakfast club, which provides a very safe and happy start to the school day, and is helping to improve attendance and punctuality.

## **The leadership and management**

## **requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement. Although the school's performance is improving securely and quickly in several key areas and subjects, senior leaders are yet to raise successfully the quality of teaching to a consistently good standard, especially in lower Key Stage 2. The middle leaders are still at an early stage of developing their role and, therefore, do not yet make an effective contribution to driving school improvement forward.
- The Head of School and Executive Headteacher are leading the improvements strongly and have the full confidence of the academy trust, staff and pupils in their ability to do so. There is a strong determination, shared by all leaders and among staff, that this quickly becomes a good school.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs to improve, and have a secure grasp of how to do this. Robust plans are firmly in place for the school's future improvement and many well-considered initiatives to address underperformance in teaching, pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour are well underway.
- Leaders are tackling key priorities with a strong sense of urgency and have achieved a lot in a short period of time. Since September 2013, several improvements are clearly evident. Pupils' attendance, for example, has improved significantly and behaviour is better. More pupils are already making faster progress, and especially so in reading. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 and pupils who speak English as an additional language also achieve well. This clearly shows leaders' ability to make further improvements.
- The leadership of teaching, including arrangements to manage the performance of staff, have strengthened. Expectations of good quality teaching for all staff are clear. All teachers are now set targets for improvement, and improvement plans agreed for individual teachers' performance. This is helping to hold staff to account for their teaching quality and pupils' achievement. Staff particularly appreciate the training opportunities and support received resulting from the partnership with the Humber Training School, St Joseph's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy and NoLCAT.
- Senior leaders carefully check the quality of teaching and successfully coach staff to improve their practice. Leaders know that they are yet to fully address a small remnant of weak teaching in lower Key Stage 2.
- Middle leaders, including those responsible for leading specific subjects, many of whom are relatively new to post, are eager to make a stronger contribution to driving improvement forward. They are starting to develop their roles in order to do so. They have devised improvement plans and are now implementing agreed actions. However, they are yet to develop the skills they need to review the data showing pupils' attainment and progress effectively.
- Leaders have put into place an effective system for tracking pupils' progress and measuring their attainment. Their analysis of this information is helping to pinpoint correctly where improvement is needed most. Pupils that have fallen too far behind are now identified more quickly and support put in place to help them catch up.
- The new primary school sports funding is used to provide more clubs for pupils to attend, as well as to improve the quality of teaching in physical education (PE) lessons. While this is still at a relatively early stage of development, more pupils are enjoying their PE lessons and showing signs that it is leading to more healthy lifestyles and improved physical well-being.
- The curriculum is enhanced through a growing number of school trips and residential visits.

However, opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills by writing at length are still overlooked.

- The academy trust is providing school leaders with support and challenge in equal measure, which is effectively securing the recent improvements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors recognise that while, in the past, they have been very supportive of the school, they have not always asked searching enough questions of leaders, in order to hold leaders to account for the school's performance in relation to other schools nationally. Governors' expectations of leaders have not been high enough.
- The Chair of the Governing Body has significantly strengthened the governing body by taking advantage of training provided by the Northern Lincolnshire Catholic Academy Trust. Challenging targets for the school's improvement have now been set and clear timescales for any remaining underperformance in teaching and achievement to be addressed have been agreed.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Governors are keen that good teaching is rewarded and take every opportunity to encourage the staff when appropriate. They are knowledgeable about how additional funds are spent, including the pupil premium, but they do not yet keep a careful enough watch on how well it is used to help eligible pupils catch up with others.
- The Chair of the Governing Body recognises that an external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium funding, will be helpful in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved. Leaders are keen to implement any recommendations from this review.

## 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>	139009
<b>Local authority</b>	North East Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	440134

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>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	245
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jan Ducey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Catherine McHale
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01472 357982
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