

# St Margaret Mary's Catholic Infant School

Pilch Lane, Liverpool, Merseyside, L14 0JG

## Inspection dates

2–3 December 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The dedicated headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has the full confidence of staff and governors. Together they are a strong team and lead by example. Their shared ambition is to provide the very best for every pupil.
- The school is a happy community, where pupils feel very safe and are well cared for by nurturing adults who know them well.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is above average and has improved since the last inspection.
- Children make a good start to their learning in the early years because of the close attention adults give to developing their language and social skills.
- Good progress continues through Year 1 and Year 2 so that by the time they leave the school attainment is typically above average.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They get on well together and support each other in lessons. They are polite and helpful and are proud of their school.
- School leaders, including governors, have a good understanding of how well the school is performing and where it can do better. Their actions have secured improvements in raising pupils' achievement and ensured that teaching over time is consistently good with some outstanding features.
- The rich curriculum, supported by numerous visits and clubs, provides pupils with many memorable learning experiences. These, and the school's strong ethos and values, promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always challenge the most able pupils to enable them to reach their full potential, especially in mathematics.
- Leaders are yet to ensure that the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium and others in the school is closed.
- Boys do not always achieve as well as they could in writing. Consequently, the gap between their attainment and that of girls in the school is too wide.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes as well as a number of small groups working with teachers or teaching assistants.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, staff, groups of pupils, parents and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, scrutinised pupils' work in their books, spoke informally to pupils during break times and lunchtimes and visited the after-school club.
- Documents relating to pupils' current attainment and progress were scrutinised, along with leaders' monitoring of the school's work, minutes of governing body meetings, documents relating to attendance and safeguarding, and reports provided from external consultants and local authority moderation visits.
- Inspectors took account of 25 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Thirty two staff questionnaires were also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Gillian Burrow, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Melvyn Hemmings

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Margaret Mary's is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Of the minority of pupils from other ethnic groups, half are of Asian heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average but is increasing.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) has increased over the last three years and is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- Provision in the Nursery is mainly part-time.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school provision managed by the governing body.
- The school supports the local authority by moderating Year 2 assessments in other schools.

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

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is outstanding and increase pupils' progress by:
  - ensuring that the most able pupils are always challenged to achieve as well as they can, especially in mathematics
  - making sure boys are stimulated and motivated to write well.
- Improve the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils by ensuring that leaders closely check the impact of actions taken.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led and managed by an experienced and dedicated headteacher who leads by example and is highly committed to the school. She is well supported by an able deputy and together they share the ambition to provide the very best for every child. Successful teamwork among leaders and staff at all levels has contributed well to improvements in achievement and teaching.
- School leaders have a good understanding of how well the school is performing and where it can do better. Next steps and priorities are clear and plans for improvement are well thought out. This is because school evaluation is accurate and thorough.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Staff feel valued and are keen to improve their skills. Regular observations of teaching, including staff having opportunities to observe each other, enable leaders to provide the necessary guidance and support to improve teaching further. Good opportunities for professional development and training are provided and this is linked closely to need. Pay awards for teachers are dependent on good and better progress from their pupils as well as improvements in their other areas of responsibility.
- Middle leaders are effective. They have clear responsibilities and a good understanding of the strengths and what needs to be done next in the subjects they lead. They report their findings from the monitoring they carry out to senior leaders and governors and create next step action plans.
- The school's curriculum, successfully planned for the recently revised National Curriculum, ensures that many of the subjects are clearly linked together through topics. There are good opportunities to learn in different ways and through a variety of memorable experiences and visits: for example, the Year 2 zoo trip and Year 1 farm visit, which link to topics being covered. Learning about life in Africa has led to the pupils' involvement in fundraising for families there.
- This rich curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy learning about different faiths. This promotes a good understanding of tolerance and helps them to begin to understand the values of modern Britain. Pupils of different backgrounds treat each other with respect and learn harmoniously together. The school is clearly committed to tackling discrimination. Whilst also being committed to providing equality of opportunity, at times this is not fully met when some pupils do not reach their potential.
- Pupil premium funding is allocated to a variety of activities to support disadvantaged pupils both socially and academically. However, the effectiveness of this spending has not been checked regularly enough and the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school is still too wide. Leaders have put in place plans to check more robustly on the progress of these pupils and the impact of the support they receive.
- Pupils' well-being and physical development benefit from leaders' effective management of the primary sport funding. The increased range of activities and coaching available at lunchtime means that there are more pupils participating regularly and more opportunities for competitive sport with other schools. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills are enhanced by the work they do alongside specialist coaches. Parent workshops on healthy eating also support the school's work to promote healthy lifestyles.
- The local authority appropriately provides a minimal level of support for this good and improving school. Good use is made of expertise in the school. Staff share good practice in Year 2 moderation with other schools and school staff act as moderators for the local authority.
- Parental views of the school and its leadership are extremely positive. They very much value the wide range of parental workshops on offer, for example internet safety and crafts for Christmas. These provide good opportunities for parents to work with their child in school and support them at home and are very well attended. All parents who completed the online questionnaire, 'Parent View', said they would recommend the school to others.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and know what the school needs to do next to improve further. Governors use their varied skills and expertise to support and challenge the school effectively.
  - Governors visit regularly and the headteacher keeps them well informed. They review data and know how achievement in this school compares with other schools. Governors have a good overview of the quality of teaching. Minutes of governing body meetings show that they ask questions about what the school is doing to improve teaching and achievement.
  - Finances are managed efficiently. Governors are aware of how the primary school sports funding is allocated and the benefits this brings to pupils. They know that although pupil premium has been

allocated to a variety of support there is still further work to be done and actions are in place to tackle this.

- Governors ensure that pay progression is dependent on sufficiently good performance and have high expectations of staff paid to take on extra responsibilities.
- Safeguarding arrangements are securely in place and meet all government requirements.

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

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They show respect for each other and the adults around them and are polite and well mannered.
- St Margaret Mary's Infant School is a happy community where pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to do well. As a result attendance is above average.
- In many lessons behaviour is exemplary because of the way that pupils listen to their teachers and settle to activities. They are keen to do well and most take care with the presentation of their work. Very occasionally, however, especially if activities do not challenge appropriately, some pupils become distracted from their learning.
- There are consistent systems in place to encourage good behaviour, which the pupils understand and appreciate. The colour coded rewards and mentor system recently put in place spurs pupils on to behave well.
- Pupils readily accept each other's differences and value the many opportunities provided to enhance their spiritual, social and cultural development. They contribute to the school's ethos and look after their environment well. Attractive displays of pupils' work are evident throughout the school.
- Parents agree that behaviour is good and are pleased to have 'Magpies' before- and after-school provision available. This is led by school staff and the same good standards of behaviour are evident.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel extremely safe and secure in school saying, 'No-one lets us down; we can always find someone to help us.'
- Pupils are taught very effectively to identify and manage potential risks to their well-being. They clearly explain how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations including the danger of strangers, road safety and safe use of mobile technologies.
- Staff provide outstanding pastoral care for pupils and their families and the school has robust systems in place to support pupils whose circumstances could make them vulnerable.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of different kinds of bullying and are very clear that although they have no concerns about bullying they know that staff would deal with any incident quickly and effectively. Pupils appointed as 'Anti Bullying Ambassadors' promote this understanding well.
- Pupils learn the importance of respecting different points of view and of fairness when taking on extra responsibilities, for example as school council and eco committee members. This is further extended through the work of the School Parliament made up of pupils from a group of local schools. A Year 2 residential visit to Crosby Hall provides further understanding of the importance of looking after each other.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching is typically good across the school. This was confirmed by teaching observed during the inspection, the work in pupils' books and the school records of the quality of teaching. Consequently, pupils in all year groups learn well.
- Relationships are good and mutual respect between teachers and pupils aids learning so that there is no fear of failure. There is a good sense of urgency about starting lessons. Generally no time is lost in pupils getting down to work.
- Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn because activities are interesting and fun. These are enriched by a good range of visits and visitors such as a war veteran visiting school to talk about evacuees as part of topic work. During the inspection, a group of Year 1 pupils visited a local supermarket to look at product packaging and display linked to their work in design technology.
- Teachers explain work clearly so that pupils know precisely what is expected of them. Careful questioning

checks pupils' understanding, clarifies any misconceptions, and deepens learning. As a result pupils grow in confidence to think for themselves.

- The teaching of mathematics is good with a focus on practical activities. For example, in a Year 1 class, when some pupils were not confident about making number sentences to 10, the teacher quickly adapted the activity by including different practical resources and, as a result, these pupils were able to complete the task and feel very proud of their success.
- Reading and writing skills are taught well. Phonics (learning letters and the sound they make) are taught successfully and pupils apply their skills well in writing and when tackling new words in their reading. This is supported by good opportunities for pupils to read at home and to use their skills in other lessons. However, at times boys are less motivated to write than girls.
- Although teachers often use assessment information successfully to match work to pupils' needs this is not always the case, especially in mathematics. Occasionally, the most able pupils complete work that is too easy for them and do not progress to more challenging tasks quickly enough.
- Marking of pupils' work usually gives helpful advice and guidance about what they have done well and what they could improve next time. Pupils are encouraged to work together and sometimes assess their own work or comment on the work of others. This gives them a good sense of the importance of cooperation and the value to be gained from helping others.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide very effective support for pupils with special educational needs in small groups and through individual teaching. Support for disadvantaged pupils who need extra help is often effective but their progress is not always checked closely enough to make sure that they are achieving the best they can.

### **The achievement of pupils is good**

- Pupils make good progress in all year groups from their individual starting points in the early years. By the time they leave Year 2, attainment is typically above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils begin Year 1 with broadly average attainment but with writing skills below those expected. They make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, with some pupils making better than expected progress, especially in writing. During 2013 the school had a significant focus on improving pupils' writing skills and the results of assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2014 were well-above national averages in writing and mathematics and broadly in line in reading.
- Many enjoy writing and the focus on the basic skills of writing has improved their accuracy in the use of punctuation and their overall progress. Assessment shows boys, however, did not make as much progress as girls and they still lag behind the girls. This is because their writing is not always imaginative enough.
- Standards in mathematics are consistently above national average. Pupils have secure basic skills and make good progress in applying their skills in simple problems.
- As a result of the effective teaching of phonics, pupils performed well in the 2014 reading screening check in Year 1, attaining above the national average. By the end of Year 2 attainment is above average and pupils read confidently and with expression.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. This is because of careful monitoring of their progress that ensures their needs are fully met. Additional support and guidance they are given by teachers and teaching assistants help these pupils to grow in confidence and achieve their best. An example of this is the excellent small group sessions following a detailed phonics programme, which helps pupils improve their reading and writing skills using letters and sounds.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Many reached higher standards than others in the reading screening check in Year 1 and their attainment was well above at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The most able pupils make good progress, with more of them reaching above-average attainment, especially in writing. In mathematics, however, although overall progress is good, not as many pupils reach the higher level because at times their work is not hard enough to ensure they consistently make rapid progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium make good progress from their starting points. However, the gap between these pupils and other pupils in the school is not closing quickly enough as other pupils are moving ahead at a faster rate. Adjustments are in place but progress is not always checked rigorously enough to make sure that disadvantaged pupils catch up quickly.

**The early years provision is good**

- From starting points generally below and sometimes lower than those typically found, especially in the areas of language and social development, children make at least good progress in the early years. The proportion of children who leave Reception working at the level identified for their age is higher than the national average, so they are well prepared for Year 1.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. There is a good balance of activities between those chosen by the children and those taught by teachers and teaching assistants. Where activities are adult led, these are well focussed and delivered with enthusiasm. This motivates the children well and effective use is made of questioning and discussion to assess what children can do in order to plan next steps in learning. Children are able to choose from a range of resources, both indoors and outdoors. However, occasionally, when children are choosing for themselves, the most able children are not challenged well enough to make the most of their ability.
- The development of children's communication skills is given high priority. Speaking and listening are central to each activity. Teachers and teaching assistants take every opportunity to help children extend their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. In a Reception class, whilst sharing the story 'Room on the Broom', the teacher developed children's language skills well. Careful questioning and fun delivery by the teacher encouraged children to use what they had learned previously about linking letters and sounds to write a letter to one of the characters in the story.
- Children's good progress is the result of effective leadership and management. This ensures that activities planned are based on careful observation of children's progress. The early years team work well together with a common sense of purpose, to ensure all children, including those with disabilities and special educational needs have the opportunity to learn and develop.
- A high priority is placed upon promoting children's physical and emotional health, safety and well-being. As a result children feel very safe. They work and play well together in harmony with one another and understand what is expected of them. Kind and caring relationships ensure that children are happy and settled in school. Children develop a positive attitude to learning and behave well because the school instils its values into them from this very young age.
- Parents are fully involved in making their child's start at school as smooth as possible. They appreciate the information provided about their child from the school system that tracks small steps of achievement and the opportunities to take part in workshops, which help them support their child at home. A strong partnership is established between home and school from a very early stage, which then continues through the school.

## 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>	104481
<b>Local authority</b>	Knowsley
<b>Inspection number</b>	448272

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	469
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Clare Ferguson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jayne Dunn
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 April 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 2284024
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