

# St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School

Pilch Lane, Liverpool, Merseyside, L14 0JG

**Inspection dates** 10–11 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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The school is led well. Governors have managed the very recent change in headship successfully and carefully. They have ensured continuity, with minimal disruption for the pupils and for their learning and progress.
- The acting headteacher has taken the opportunity to strengthen the school's systems for checking on pupils' progress and on the quality of teaching. This is having a very positive effect on pupils' achievement.
- Pupils feel safe and secure. They behave well and show very positive attitudes to learning and to school.
- Senior and middle leaders, actively supported by governors, are driving improvements forward at a brisk pace.
- Teaching is good overall.
- As a result, pupils are achieving increasingly well; their rates of progress are good and improving rapidly. Standards are above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils with disabilities and special educational needs are provided for well and they achieve well.
- An increasing number of the school's most-able pupils are working at standards above those expected for their age.
- Any gaps that remain between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in the school are closing rapidly.
- Attendance figures are above the national average.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement is not as strong as it should be.
- Work is sometimes too hard for some pupils or too easy for others and not matched well enough to their different needs and abilities.
- The quality of marking varies and pupils are not always given the opportunity to improve or correct their work in response to teachers' marking.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of lessons, across each of the year groups in school. Four observations were carried out jointly with the acting headteacher. The inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 3 and 6 and discussed with them the books they have enjoyed and those they are currently reading.
- The inspectors met with a group of governors, with senior and middle leaders, with the school's learning mentor and with a group of pupils. They also met with a representative of Liverpool Roman Catholic Archdiocese, with an external consultant who has been working with the school and with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account 27 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also took into account the school's most recent survey of parents' views. An inspector met with a group of parents during the inspection to hear their views about the school.
- The views that staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned were also taken into account.
- In observing the school's work, inspectors looked at and evaluated the work in pupils' books. They also scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school's improvement plan, records of pupils' attainment and progress and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Diane Auton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Prydwen Elfed-Owens	Additional Inspector
Marian Harker	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized junior school.
- Most pupils are White British, with a small number of pupils from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. Currently, no pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school's headteacher retired at the end of the last school year. In September the headteacher of another local Roman Catholic primary school was seconded to the position of acting headteacher of this school. Procedures are currently under way to recruit and select a permanent headteacher for the school.

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

- Further improve the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better across the school, and so that on-going improvements in pupils' progress are sustained by:
  - making sure that work is always matched well to pupils' differing learning needs and abilities
  - making sure that marking is consistently effective in every class
  - making sure pupils always have opportunities to respond to the advice their teachers give them when they mark their work.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher has brought experience, expertise and energy to the role. She has made an accurate initial assessment of the school's many strengths and of the areas of its work that could be even more effective and she has set out a clear agenda for taking the school forward. She is strongly supported by other senior staff and by middle leaders and governors and they have quickly become a very effective team.
- Senior and middle leaders are all involved in making systematic and rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and on its impact on pupils' learning and progress. This has ensured that the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement is very largely good or better. Leaders know there is more to do to ensure that this is consistently the case throughout the school and that everyone is equally well supported, so that the few remaining gaps in pupils' learning can be addressed successfully.
- The school has used its additional pupil premium funding well. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' learning and progress has improved rapidly and so their achievement is now similar to that of the other pupils in school. This illustrates the school's successful promotion of equal opportunities for all of its pupils.
- Staff performance targets are challenging. They are directly linked to the school's priorities which are set out clearly in an extremely well-crafted strategic improvement plan. There is also a well-designed programme of very good quality training for staff at all levels in the school to support continuing improvements.
- The curriculum is increasingly effective in supporting the development of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Topic work brings subjects together and offers rich and interesting opportunities for pupils to broaden, apply and develop their skills and knowledge. These include working with visiting specialists, such as an artist in residence. All of this has a positive impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them well for their future lives in modern Britain.
- The school uses its additional sport funding well to ensure that a wide range of activities is available for pupils. There are many opportunities for pupils to enjoy sport and physical education after school and to take part in competitive events. Staff skills have been enhanced and there are good levels of participation by pupils who speak enthusiastically about how much they enjoy these activities.
- The local authority has worked with the school in an advisory role over recent times and agrees that this is a good, well-led school. The Liverpool Archdiocese's educational advisers have also worked closely with the governing body to help to steer the school successfully through a time of change.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have made sure that the school is led well. They are helping to check on the quality of teaching and learning and they have a realistic view of the school's current strengths and areas that require some improvement. Appropriate plans are in place for the next steps that need to be taken to ensure full consistency in the quality of teaching.
  - Senior and middle leaders provide governors with regular and accurate reports on pupils' progress. Governors have a good awareness of national standards and are able to compare the school's performance against them. This enables them to hold the school rigorously to account.
  - Governors make sure that checks of staff performance are thorough and that leaders and staff are set challenging targets linked to pupils' progress and the school's priorities.
  - They make sure that safeguarding policies and procedures are fully in place. They oversee how the pupil premium is spent and the difference this is making to disadvantaged pupils. They make sure that the primary sport funding is spent wisely and they make checks on the impact of this expenditure.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- They are polite and welcoming to visitors. Playtimes and lunchtimes are happy and sociable occasions. Pupils know that staff expect them to be sensible and responsible and they respond well to these expectations.
- Pupils' positive attitudes are helping them to make good and improving progress. In lessons, they usually organise themselves well; they listen to instructions from adults and they work collaboratively with a partner or in a group. They are gaining confidence in their abilities and they are becoming increasingly

aware of the standards they are working at and the achievement targets they are aiming for, especially in those classes where the school's new marking policy is fully implemented.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils' understanding of different types of bullying is developing well. They have discussed these issues in the School Parliament, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying, and say that they feel that their understanding has improved. They are confident that if any such problems arise they would be able to deal with them and that staff would be on hand to help.
- There are opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility, for example as monitors or as school councillors.
- All necessary checks on adults are carried out and records now meet requirements. Staff and governor training in child protection is updated regularly.
- The school provides caring support for its potentially vulnerable pupils and for those who have disabilities or special educational needs. Staff ensure that all pupils are fully included in everything on offer. They work well with outside agencies to ensure that support is targeted appropriately for children and families who require it.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- The predominantly good quality of teaching is enabling pupils to learn and progress increasingly well in both English and mathematics.
- Learning is often very successful when teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and do. In a set of lessons in Year 5, for example, pupils devised a list of instructions for getting rid of 'house goblins'. They were engaged and intrigued by this topic. In their activities, skilful teaching enabled them to think analytically, to evaluate and critique each other's work and to develop complex stylistic features in their writing. There was a clear focus on making their writing as effective and interesting as it could possibly be. Pupils responded enthusiastically and made excellent progress towards their learning targets.
- Reading is taught well. Year 3 pupils who read to an inspector used their knowledge of letters and sounds to work out new words and read with confidence and clarity. Home/school reading records are used well and parents are supportive in reading with their children at home and helping them to practise tricky words.
- Topic work is planned well to provide opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects and for a range of purposes. This contributes well to the successful drive to raise standards in writing.
- The work in pupils' books is marked conscientiously. A new marking policy has been developed this term and, where this has been fully adopted, marking is often of outstanding quality, providing excellent guidance to help pupils improve their work. The policy has not yet been fully implemented in every class, however. Sometimes, pupils are not given clear advice about what they should do next to improve their work. In some classes, pupils are not always given the opportunities they need to respond to their teachers' advice in marking.
- Teaching is usually planned well to ensure the correct balance of challenge and support for pupils of all abilities. Occasionally, however, when work may be too easy for some or too hard for others, pupils' learning and progress are not as successful as they might otherwise be.
- Teachers and well-trained teaching assistants work together well to ensure that those pupils who need extra help, such as those with special educational needs, are given the support they require. This is helping to ensure that those pupils grow in confidence and make good progress.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most pupils are working at the expected levels for their age in English and mathematics when they join the school in Year 3.
- Standards in mathematics and writing were above average at the end of Year 6 in 2014; they were significantly above average in reading. This represents considerable improvements on the broadly average standards reached in the two previous years.
- Almost all of the pupils in Year 6 in 2014 made the nationally expected rate of progress from their starting points in these subjects. The proportion making more than the expected rate of progress was a little

smaller than the national proportion, however.

- Decisive actions are being taken in the current year to ensure that progress rates accelerate in every year group. This is having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils. Assessment data for the autumn term, confirmed by inspection evidence, show that most pupils are on track to make rapid progress and to achieve well this year. Leaders are working to ensure that the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement is consistently good or better and to ensure that any remaining barriers to progress can be eliminated.
- The school's most-able pupils are achieving increasingly well. At the end of Year 6 in 2014, the proportion reaching the higher levels in English and mathematics was greater than in previous years and was in line with national expectations. Pupils did particularly well in the test of their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills, where the number reaching the higher level was significantly above average. Across the school in the current year an increasing number of pupils are working at standards above those that are expected for their age.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2014, there were some gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of the other pupils in the year group. In mathematics and in writing, disadvantaged pupils were about a year below national standards and more than a year below the standards reached by their Year 6 classmates in school. In reading, the gap between them and the national group was about two terms; the gap between them and their classmates was nearly a year.
- Prompt and appropriate actions taken in the current term are ensuring that gaps are closing rapidly. School data for the autumn term, confirmed by inspection evidence, show that gaps between the attainment in English and mathematics of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils have closed completely in the majority of classes. Where this is not yet the case, remaining gaps are very small. Data also show that disadvantaged pupils are making the same good progress as their peers in every year group.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. They show real interest in books and can hold confident discussions about those they have particularly enjoyed. Standards in reading are above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities achieve well from their individual starting points, as a result of well-managed and careful provision made for them in 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>	104482
<b>Local authority</b>	Knowsley
<b>Inspection number</b>	448273

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>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	486
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	M Rawsthorne
<b>Headteacher</b>	M Armstrong
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 January 2010
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