

# Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School

Kepler Street, Seaforth, Merseyside, L21 3TE

**Inspection dates** 14–15 January 2015

|                                |                      |             |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| <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.

- Effective leadership and management by the headteacher and other senior leaders has successfully improved the quality of teaching. As a result pupils achieve well and make at least good progress.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils' positive attitudes in lessons make a strong contribution to their learning.
- Teaching is good over time and the impact of some teaching on pupils' learning is outstanding.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because of the effective support provided.
- Pupils new to the school are made very welcome. They achieve well from their different starting points because their needs are identified quickly and are met well.
- The curriculum captures pupils' interests and imagination. Pupils enjoy being challenged to extend their knowledge and develop their skills.
- Pupils are happy and feel safe. Parents have a high regard for the way the staff care for their children.
- From a low starting point, pupils reach the nationally expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- An increasing proportion of the school's most-able pupils are working at standards above those expected for their age.
- Children get a good start to their learning in the early years because teaching prioritises the development of their personal, social and communication skills.
- Senior leaders and middle leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's performance. Regular checks on the quality of teaching take place and the progress of pupils is tracked carefully.
- Governors are committed to supporting the school to continue to move forward. They know the school well and provide good support and challenge for school leaders.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet leading to outstanding achievement overall for pupils. This is because achievement in writing is not yet as strong as in reading and mathematics.
- Some activities currently offered to children in Reception do not always support the best development of reading, writing and number skills.
- Some middle leaders are at an early stage in developing their areas of responsibility.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of lessons across each of the year groups in school. Two observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and one with the assistant headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work. They listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 2 and they observed the teaching of reading skills. Inspectors talked to pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- Inspectors talked with pupils as they played at break times, and visited the dining hall at lunchtime. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around school.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils about their work.
- Inspectors met with a group of governors, with senior and middle leaders and with the school's learning mentor. They also met with a representative of the local authority and a national leader of education who is working with the school's leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to parents informally as they brought their children to school in the morning. They also took into account the school's most recent survey of parents' views.
- The views of staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned were also taken into account.
- A range of evidence including the school's checks on its own performance, information about pupils' progress and the school's development plan was viewed by inspectors.
- Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Lyn Pender, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lindsay Hall

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most other primary schools. The number of pupils on roll has varied over recent years but is now rising steadily. Some year groups are smaller than others. Children in the Nursery class start school after their third birthday and attend for the morning session only. A small minority of children attend other nursery settings before joining the school in the Reception class. This number varies from year-to-year.
- A larger than average proportion of pupils join the Key Stage 1 and 2 classes at other than the usual times.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well above that in most other schools.
- At 68%, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported through the pupil premium funding, is high. (The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The school has experienced significant staff turbulence since the previous inspection. A number of headteachers have led the school and for several terms the school was without a substantive headteacher or deputy headteacher. The current headteacher was appointed to her post in September 2012. The senior leadership team has changed since the previous inspection and most teachers have joined the school since that time. The early years leader joined the school in September 2014 and most other middle leaders are new to the role.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The governing body provides a free breakfast club for pupils who attend the school.
- The school has well-established links with the Strand, which is the local partnership of primary schools. Links have also been created with a local high school and Edge Hill University.

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

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching in order to raise achievement further by:
  - making sure that activities to support the development of children's early literacy and numeracy skills are well-planned and consistently effective across the early years classes
  - implementing and developing the successful actions that are currently under way to raise pupils' achievement in writing.
- Continue to develop the role of middle leaders in checking on the quality and impact of teaching and in helping to guide and support improvements in teaching and learning across the school.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is held in high regard by pupils, parents, staff and governors. Aply supported by the assistant headteacher and senior leader, who form the senior leadership team, she has created a culture where everyone shares her determination to continue to improve the school and achieve the best possible outcomes for its pupils.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of how well the school is doing and development plans identify the correct priorities. Systems to record the work of the school are detailed and of a very high quality.
- Senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are regular and very robust. The outcomes of these checks are used to identify the most effective practice and any training required to sharpen or update teachers' skills. Teachers new to the profession are supported well. Leaders set challenging targets for staff and firm links exist between teachers' pay levels, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The role of middle leaders, including that of the leadership of the early years, is being developed. Most middle leaders are new to their posts and they do not yet play a full part in checking on the quality of teaching to bring about improvements.
- The assistant headteacher provides outstanding leadership and management of the school's special needs provision. Pupils' needs are identified quickly and accurately and they are given high quality support swiftly. As a result, the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are met very well and all make at least good progress from their individual starting points.
- The curriculum is engaging and motivates pupils well. The school's arrangements to check pupils' progress against the new national curriculum are well in hand. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is underpinned by the school's Christian ethos. Pupils are well-prepared for life in modern Britain. The curriculum is enriched by a range of out-of-hours clubs, trips and visitors to the school. Pupils from Year 2 upwards enjoy the opportunities they have to take part in residential trips.
- The primary school sports funding is used well. For example, the sporting skills of pupils have been developed through the school's work with specialist sports coaches. Teachers have developed their skills to teach physical education through this work and pupils say that their lessons are now more demanding and more fun.
- Partnerships with external agencies are well-established and are used effectively to help individual pupils and their families overcome any difficulties that may prevent pupils coming to school ready to learn. The school fosters a culture of respect; positive relationships exist between pupils and between pupils and adults. Equal opportunities are promoted well and any form of discrimination is not tolerated.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. They say that the headteacher and staff know their children as individuals and that all who work in the school are very helpful and approachable. The learning mentor establishes strong links with families of children whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. She works closely with pupils who sometimes find it difficult to attend school regularly and this work is having a positive impact on improving attendance rates.
- Safeguarding requirements are fully met. Staff and governors consider that keeping pupils safe is one of their prime responsibilities.
- The school values the support provided by the local authority since the last inspection. The school commissions the support of a national leader of education when required.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Following a period of staffing turbulence the governing body has worked well with the local authority and archdiocese to appoint a substantive headteacher and new senior leadership team.
  - Governors share the headteacher's high expectations for the school. The high quality information they receive from senior leaders together with their regular visits to the school ensure that governors have a good understanding of the school's performance. Minutes from governing body meetings show that governors hold leaders rigorously to account.
  - Checks on the performance of staff are thorough and governors ensure that leaders and teachers are set challenging targets linked to the progress made by pupils. Governors ensure that any increases in teachers' pay are linked to good teaching and arrangements to identify and tackle any underperformance are secure.
  - Governors have a clear overview of school finances. They regularly check that the pupil premium is having a positive impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
  - The governing body ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They greet visitors warmly and are keen to talk about their work and the way that the adults take good care of them.
- Pupils behave sensibly around school and they listen carefully in lessons. The pride they take in their work is clear to see in the increasingly high standards of presentation evident in books in all subjects.
- All adults have high expectations of behaviour and pupils are regularly given time in lessons to consider if they are 'ready to learn'.
- Pupils readily take on responsible roles, for example as members of the school council. Pupils new to the school are made very welcome and quickly settle in and make friends with their classmates.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. A nurturing, caring and harmonious atmosphere exists and pupils say they feel very safe and well-cared for. Clear systems are in place to ensure pupils, including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, are kept safe.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, for example when riding their bicycles or using the internet or other technology.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of the different types of bullying. They say that incidents do not happen often but if they do they trust the adults to deal with issues quickly and sensitively. School rules are understood by all and pupils think the adults apply these fairly.
- Pupils appreciate the way that the learning mentor is available to help them if they have any concerns.
- The popular and well-run breakfast club provides a calm and well-ordered start to the school day. Parents say that they find this resource very useful and over a third of pupils in the school regularly use this provision. Although attendance in the school remains below average, leaders maintain a firm focus on bringing about improvements. As a result, attendance rates continue to rise steadily and an increasing proportion of pupils arrive at school on time and ready to learn. Pupils who join the school at other than the usual times, some of whom have previously attended a number of schools, are quickly helped to understand the school's firm stance on the need for good attendance. The learning mentor continues to work closely with the few families who find it difficult to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Senior leaders' ongoing drive to improve the quality of teaching is proving successful. The quality of teaching is typically good over time and some teaching, particularly in the current Year 4 and Year 6, has an outstanding impact on pupils' learning.
- The teaching of reading and mathematics is effective in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and pupils often make excellent progress. This is because teachers make sure that work provides the right level of challenge. Pupils have regular opportunities to revisit previous learning to make sure they can recall facts and practise skills. This gets them ready to apply these when tackling new learning.
- Teachers use technology effectively to enable pupils to practise their number skills. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils were using new handheld devices to revise work on decimals. The devices provided immediate information about how well individual pupils were doing and enabled teachers to intervene quickly to address misconceptions and move learning forward. This meant the level of challenge and pace of learning matched learners' needs precisely and enabled all to make excellent progress.
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar skills are being taught increasingly well and pupils are given many opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes and in different styles. Leaders have recognised that pupils do not have a wide enough vocabulary and have taken steps to develop this aspect of learning. The actions taken to bring achievement in writing up to the levels in reading and mathematics are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. However this is work in progress and there has not yet been time to see the full impact of the school's efforts.
- Teachers make clear to pupils what they need to do to improve when they mark their work and pupils usually have time to make their corrections and act on the advice given. In lessons, teachers check regularly that pupils understand what is being taught and use the information gained to address misconceptions and move learning on.
- Skilful, well trained teaching assistants work closely with teachers to provide a good range of challenge and support for pupils who are disadvantaged or disabled and those with special educational needs. As a

result of this effective provision, pupils make at least the same good progress as other pupils given their abilities and starting points.

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

- Pupils make good progress overall and achieve well. Senior leaders maintain an unrelenting focus on improving the quality of teaching and, as a result, the achievement of pupils continues to improve.
- By the end of Year 6 pupils consistently reach broadly average standards. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014 all pupils made the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils making better than the expected progress was high in reading and mathematics and in line with the national average in writing. Gaps in learning due to some previous underachievement in Key Stage 1 are closing.
- Progress during Key Stage 1 is good and improving. In 2014 attainment improved and most pupils reached the national average standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Senior leaders have rightly identified that achievement in reading and mathematics is stronger than that in writing. Teaching has focused on developing the basic skills of grammar and spelling and the expansion of pupils' vocabulary. Evidence in pupils' books show that progress in writing is becoming more rapid and pupils' attainment is improving in this subject. As a result pupils are more confident when they tackle longer pieces of writing, including when they write in other subjects. Leaders' relentless focus on improving the quality of handwriting has led to greater consistency across the school. Pupils are developing an obvious pride in the presentation of their work.
- The most able pupils make outstanding progress in reading and mathematics and an increasing proportion are starting to reach the higher levels in these subjects. They make good progress in writing. Strong links have been formed with a local high school where some Year 6 pupils attend English and mathematics lessons. These opportunities raise pupils' aspirations and speed up their learning.
- An above-average proportion of pupils leave or join the school within each year group. All pupils make at least good progress from their starting points, but those who have been in school the longest attain the highest standards and make the best progress over time.
- Pupils in Year 1 develop their skills in phonics well. In 2014, the proportion reaching the required level in the Year 1 phonics check was close to the national average; this was an improvement on previous years. Throughout Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress in reading and some are doing better than this.
- Pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs make at least good progress from their individual starting points. This is because staff have a very clear understanding of the precise needs of these pupils and provide well-targeted support that helps them to achieve well.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively. It is directed towards supporting the large proportion of disadvantaged pupils attending the school. At the end of Year 6 in 2014 gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged and other pupils narrowed. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils, many of whom joined the school at other than the usual time, was around a term behind other pupils nationally and was similar to other pupils in the school. All disadvantaged pupils in the school made the progress expected of them in all subjects and a high proportion made better than expected progress in reading and mathematics. The proportion making better than expected progress in writing was in line with the national average.
- A culture of reading for pleasure exists in the school and reading skills are developed well. Pupils have the opportunity to learn from visits to the school by published authors and read books from a wide range of genres. One pupil summed it up by saying that books 'lose you in a world of imagination'.

### **The early years provision** is good

- A calm, caring atmosphere exists in the early years classroom. The welcoming environment helps children to settle well. They quickly become used to the daily routines in the setting. They develop into curious and increasingly independent learners because of the range of engaging activities provided.
- A high proportion of children join the Nursery class with skills that are weak, particularly in communication, literacy, mathematics and personal and social development. Children have a considerable range of needs that present a challenge to their learning and a small minority of children join the Nursery and Reception classes with significant delay in some skills and areas of development.
- Children behave well. They learn how to follow instructions and are taught how to take turns. They play happily together and learn how to listen carefully to the adults and each other.
- Rates of progress have improved over time, as a result of improvements in teaching. The majority of

children reached a good level of development at the end of Reception in 2014. Children made especially good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. This prepared them well for learning in Year 1.

- Children’s phonic skills are developed well by the Nursery and Reception teachers and the well-trained teaching assistants. All adults are knowledgeable and well-prepared and skilfully question children to check their understanding and address any misconceptions. However, children do not have enough opportunities to improve their phonic skills when they engage in play activities.
- The activities provided in the setting capture children’s interests well. For example, children were having great fun as they played happily together as doctors and nurses in the ‘Baby Clinic’; good development of social and speaking and listening skills were evident. Teaching has had a largely positive impact on children’s learning and progress over time. However, currently, children’s literacy and numeracy skills are not sufficiently reinforced as they engage in the range of free choice activities provided. Leaders are aware that progress in these areas is not quite as rapid as it should be at the moment and steps to bring about improvements are in hand.
- Leadership and management of the early years is securely good over time. The current early years leader is at an early stage in developing her role as leader and manager of the setting. Safeguarding and welfare arrangements meet requirements.
- There are close links with parents. Nursery staff visit parents at home before their children start school. Parents receive regular information about their children’s progress and contribute to the understanding of how well their children are doing by telling staff about what they have achieved at home.

## 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> | 104929 |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Sefton |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 448268 |

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> | 154   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                              |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Anthony Kellett                                 |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Joan Jenkins                                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 27 April 2010                                   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0151 928 3158                                   |
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