

St Michael's Catholic Primary School

Guion Street, Off Boaler Street, Liverpool, Merseyside, L6 9DU

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 headteacher is well supported by staff and governors. Her inspirational leadership has successfully driven the school forward during a period of substantial change.
- Senior leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's strengths. They know what needs to be done to continue to improve, and have the skill and expertise to achieve their high ambition for the school.
- School leaders, including governors, regularly check on the quality of teaching and learning to make sure that standards are improving.
- Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school because they know that staff care for them extremely well. They are taught comprehensively about the dangers of modern life.
- Pupils enjoy learning and good behaviour is a feature across the whole school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective.
- Attendance has improved and is now similar to the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good and teachers create lessons which capture pupils' interests. A wide range of activities enrich pupils' experiences.
- Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress, often from low starting points.
- Effective support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs helps them achieve at least as well as other pupils.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who join the school later in their primary education achieve well because their needs are identified quickly and good support is provided for them.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years because of the close attention all adults give to meeting their learning and developmental needs.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always check that pupils follow the guidance provided when they mark pupils' work. As a result, pupils do not always have the opportunity to improve their work or learn from their mistakes.
- There are times when teaching assistants are not as effective as they could be.
- Some middle leaders are not yet skilled enough to drive improvement in their area of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes taught by teachers and in activities taken by teaching assistants. Two part-lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and two learning walks around the school also took place.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils and observed and spoke with pupils during lessons, and play times. They also listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders and managers, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. An inspector met informally with a parent collecting a child from school.
- A range of documents were considered by inspectors, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings, and records relating to attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also examined work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors took account of the summary of the responses to a parental questionnaire recently distributed by the school. However, there were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to trigger a result.
- Inspectors also considered responses from 23 staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Platt	Additional Inspector
Michael Tonge	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than most primary schools and the number of pupils on roll is increasing.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils at the very early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who start and leave school during the primary phase is well above average.
- The school provides part-time places for three- and four-year-old children in the Nursery class and full-time places for children in the Reception class.
- The school provides a breakfast club, which is run by the governing body.
- A substantial refurbishment programme has taken place since the previous inspection.
- Three new teachers joined the staff in September 2014 and the headteacher and deputy headteacher have taken up their posts since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning to accelerate pupils' progress and secure higher levels of attainment by making sure that teachers always:
 - deploy teaching assistants effectively across the whole lesson
 - check that pupils follow the advice given when they mark their work
 - provide opportunities for pupils to practise their English and mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by continuing to build on the skills of middle leaders so they are able to contribute fully to raising standards in their area of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a very clear view of how successful the school can be. She is an excellent leader and very well supported by the governing body and staff. Through a period of significant change, school leaders have successfully maintained good quality teaching. As a result, pupils' achievement is good and the school has the capacity to continue to improve.
- The quality of teaching is regularly and robustly checked by senior leaders. Professional development is planned for staff and carefully matched to the needs of individuals and school priorities. Morale is high. The staff team work well together and are encouraged by school leaders to share their knowledge and expertise, which contributes toward the good quality teaching across the school.
- School leaders have a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. The leadership team evaluates thoroughly the school's performance, and development plans accurately identify the correct priorities. However, some middle leaders do not yet have the skills to contribute fully to raising standards in their area of responsibility.
- School leaders make sure that pupils' progress, including the progress of children in the early years, is rigorously checked. Any pupils in danger of falling behind are quickly identified and appropriate support is then matched closely to their needs. The good achievement of all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, confirms the school's relentless commitment towards tackling discrimination and providing all pupils with the same good opportunities to succeed.
- A variety of visitors to the school and trips linked to topic themes provide pupils with memorable learning experiences. What is more, pupils are encouraged to raise money to contribute toward the cost of school trips. For example, children in the early years prepared and sold pancakes to finance a visit to Chester Zoo. Pupils understand they have to put effort in, to get what they want. In this way, and from other opportunities within the curriculum, senior leaders are preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Good relations are fostered across the school and this is evident in the way that pupils learn and play well together.
- The primary school sport funding is used well. Specialist coaches work with pupils and staff to help develop their sporting skills. The school offers a range of after-school and lunchtime sporting activities and, as a result, pupils are developing an increasingly active and healthy lifestyle.
- The local authority provides a 'light touch' support for this good school and has confidence in its ability to improve further.
- Safeguarding requirements are fully met. All staff and governors agree that keeping pupils safe is one of their prime responsibilities, and this is very much appreciated by parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body bring considerable expertise to their roles. They are highly supportive of the school and committed to its success. Governors are very well informed about the quality of teaching and have a good understanding of how to judge the pupils' progress against other pupils in other schools. Governors know the school well because they have links with specific subjects and receive comprehensive reports from all staff. They check carefully that teachers' performance is linked to pay progression and ensure that good performance is rewarded and any underperformance is tackled.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school provides a warm, welcoming atmosphere. The care taken by pupils when creating a paper model of the Metropolitan Cathedral exemplifies the impact of the Christian ethos at the school. Pupils have created stunning artwork to decorate the corridor walls; they keep their classrooms tidy and wear their uniform with pride. Litter-pickers make sure the whole of the school is kept smart and free of litter.
- Pupils are well mannered, take good care of each other and show respect for the adults around them. The small minority of pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are usually well supported, which helps learning to continue without interruption.
- Pupils are eager to learn and work hard, they speak enthusiastically about the way their teachers make learning fun and would recommend their school to everyone.
- Pupils are keen to take on roles of responsibility around the school. Their understanding of life in a

democratic country is supported by the role of the school councillors, who are voted for by other pupils. School councillors are proud to be involved in helping to choose playground equipment. Other pupils act as play buddies to make sure that no one is lonely, and prefects help with younger children during wet playtimes and manage the resources for assemblies.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school because they know that the adults care for them very well. For example, when they were worried about strangers trying to talk to them through the school fence, school leaders covered the fence so that the pupils could feel completely secure and enjoy playing in their field.
- Pupils know about different types of discrimination and bullying. They say that incidents are rare and school records confirm this. Pupils know that there is always a member of staff who will listen to them and any concerns will be quickly and effectively dealt with.
- Staff make sure that pupils have a comprehensive understanding of risk, including risks associated with using the internet. The school also provides talks for parents to keep them up-to-date on how to keep their children safe when using new technologies.
- Pupils whose current circumstances might make them vulnerable are exceptionally well supported by school staff who will actively engage the services of external agencies when necessary.
- The well-attended breakfast club provides a calm start to the day and makes sure that the pupils who attend are on time for their lessons and ready to learn.
- Since the headteacher took up post, the school has worked tenaciously to improve attendance. Pupils proudly wear badges to show that they have attended on every school day. As a result of this successful drive, attendance is now in line with the national average and the number of pupils who miss school regularly has also reduced.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Good quality teaching of reading, writing and mathematics has promoted good achievement for pupils. This is confirmed by the school's system for checking on pupils' progress, observations in the classroom and work seen in pupils' books.
- Teachers question pupils carefully to assess their level of understanding and plan activities that pupils want to be involved with and enjoy. For example, during one Year 3 writing lesson pupils enthusiastically shared examples of similes and descriptive words which they knew would help to make their writing even more exciting for the reader.
- The development of reading skills is given high priority across the school. The recently appointed reading ambassador listens to pupils read and creates a range of exciting activities to promote reading. For example, planning for the 'Harry Potter Reading Event' is well under-way. Pupils are looking forward to coming into school with their families dressed up as characters from the books and participating in a range of reading activities. The school has developed a number of comfortable reading bays where pupils can sit and enjoy their favourite read from the wide range of books available. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they read every day in school. They also agreed that all of the reading activities that the school provides help them to read better and make them want to read more often.
- Recently there has been an increased emphasis on making sure that pupils are confident with their basic mathematical skills. Teachers make sure that pupils have opportunities to practise and develop these skills by applying their knowledge to real life situations during mathematics lessons. However, opportunities for pupils to practise English and mathematical skills across other subjects are not provided often enough.
- Marking of pupils' work has recently improved. Teachers regularly praise what has been done well and provide guidance to help pupils improve their work. However, checks that pupils complete their corrections or follow the good advice given so that they can learn from their mistakes are too infrequent.
- The effective teamwork established between teachers and well-trained teaching assistants, usually guarantees high quality support for pupils with any additional need. This is evident when pupils are working one-to-one with adults and during small-group sessions. The talents teaching assistants have are not so effectively used when the teacher is introducing the learning to the whole class.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Building on the good progress made during the early years, pupils continue to achieve well. By the time they leave Year 2, most have made good progress from their individual starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Results of the 2014 national tests for Year 6 pupils confirm that almost all pupils made the expected progress and the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics compares favourably with that found nationally.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics varies between below and well below the national average. However, this is due to the extremely high numbers of pupils starting and leaving school during the course of their primary education at times other than the expected.
- Pupils attending St Michael's for most of their time at school make at least good and sometimes excellent progress. The school provides highly effective support for pupils new to the school and those with English as an additional language, which helps them to achieve as well as their classmates. However, pupils are not always at the school long enough to attain the levels expected for their age and this impacts on their standards of attainment overall.
- The most able pupils are provided with a good level of challenge to help them to achieve well. Talented readers are invited to a reading club so that they can develop their reading skills further. There are also opportunities for pupils to visit the local high school to engage with higher level mathematics and science lessons. The most able pupils achieve well but proportionally fewer pupils attain the higher Levels 3 and 5 than do so nationally. However, an increasing proportion of pupils are attaining Level 6 in mathematics.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2014, the disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium, who are the largest group of pupils in the school, were over two terms ahead of their classmates in reading and writing and approximately one term ahead in mathematics. When compared to other pupils nationally the disadvantaged pupils were two terms behind in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff are successfully narrowing the gaps through all classes in the school between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- Skilled teaching assistants provide a good level of support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Consequently, these pupils make at least good progress from their starting points and their needs are well met.
- The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who meet the required standard in the national screening check on phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is improving but remains slightly below average. School leaders recognise this and have taken decisive action to make sure that pupils' reading skills are developed well across the school. School records show that these actions are having a positive impact on standards in reading. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly and older pupils are able to talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and how reading helps them to improve their writing.

The early years provision is good

- Most children join the Nursery class straight from home with skills that are weak, particularly in communication, language, personal and social development. A high proportion of children are at the very early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- At the start of the Reception Year, new children join the class with a range of needs that present a challenge to their learning and most have a very limited understanding of the English language. Staff assess children very carefully and put a range of additional support in place to help children acquire the language, communication and personal skills that they need.
- From their individual starting points, children make at least good progress across the early years and some make excellent progress. However, over half of the children are not fully prepared for the learning that they will meet in Year 1 because they are still catching up with the understanding of English words and the skills that they need for reading and writing.
- Links between families and school staff are built before the children start school. Parents and their children are invited to a garden party to meet staff and have a look around the school. They are also able to drop into school at the end of each school day to listen to a story. As a result, children settle well into school life and strong home and school partnerships are established.
- As a result of good leadership, the quality of teaching is good. The effective staff team work well together to make sure that activities are thoughtfully planned so children want to be involved in their learning. For example, the teacher found a letter left by the bear featuring in the class story book. The children were amazed by this and keen to read the clues to help them find what the bear needed from them. Children enthusiastically went off to search quickly and thoroughly to gather all of the items to help the bear.

- Members of the early years team work successfully together to provide good quality care. Children know how to keep themselves safe. For example, they were very careful not to slip and fall when they were outside catching snow and explaining what it felt like. Children behave well and show respect for others when learning together with or without support from an adult.

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

Unique reference number	104656
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	456141

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	362
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeanette Riley
Headteacher	Alyson Rigby
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2012
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