

St Mary's RC Primary School

Canterbury Road, Kilburn NW6 5ST

Inspection dates 22–23 March 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Inadequate |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher has brought a new life to the school which has prompted a significant change in the pace of improvement. Her passion and enthusiasm for pupils to achieve their very best have inspired the school community.
- Federation arrangements between St Mary's RC Primary School and St Joseph's RC Primary School have led to a significant improvement in leadership at all levels. Skilled leaders work alongside colleagues effectively to improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' outcomes at the end of the early years and at the end of key stage 1 have risen steadily over recent years and are above average. Standards at key stage 2 have proved harder to raise. As a result of the significant increase in the rate of pupils' progress during the last academic year, standards in key stage 2 are now rising rapidly.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations, know their subjects well and plan learning that engages pupils.
- Pupils are polite and respectful towards each other and adults. They behave well in lessons, moving around the school quietly, and displaying good manners.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They know about the measures that are in place to support them. They know they can talk to any of the adults in school or approach the 'carefree kids' worker to discuss any concerns they may have.
- Children make a good start in the early years. Expectations of what they will achieve are high. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Governors are well qualified to support and challenge leaders.
- Parents speak highly of the considerable change they have noted in the school's leadership and the impact it has had on pupils' experience in the classroom and on the progress they make.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' performance by the end of key stage 2 is not yet consistently strong.
- A small gap between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and that of others remains.
- Too few pupils attain the higher levels by the end of key stage 2.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils achieving above age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by increasing the challenge for the most-able pupils.
- Ensure that the strong progress disadvantaged pupils are making currently results in a continued narrowing of the gap between their performance and that of others nationally and in school.
- Ensure that the steady increase in attainment achieved in recent years at the end of the early years and key stage 1 results in correspondingly strong performance in key stage 2 through a relentless focus on high-quality teaching.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher leads the school with relentless enthusiasm and drive founded on a commendable sense of moral purpose. Her commitment to ensuring that pupils receive the very best education is undoubted. She has successfully ensured that teachers and support staff share her vision for pupils' success.
- Senior leaders work across both schools in the federation, ensuring that outstanding practice from the partner school impacts positively on practice at St Mary's. They provide high-quality guidance and support for teachers.
- Leaders keep a close eye on pupils' progress. They use a combination of strategies to check how well pupils are doing. They visit lessons regularly, often working alongside teachers to demonstrate effective teaching methods and guide their practice. Frequent checks on the quality of work in pupils' folders ensure that teachers receive timely and helpful feedback about how their work can be improved. The frequency and rigour of these checks have led to a high degree of consistency of practice across the school, for example in the way that teachers apply the school's policy for giving pupils feedback.
- Pupils who may have fallen behind, or who would benefit from a series of focused, small-group lessons, arrive at school early to take part in academic study groups. These are successful in increasing the rate of pupils' progress.
- A thorough programme of training provides teachers with the knowledge and skills they need. Training is matched well to teachers' needs, some being on generic themes and some tailored to the needs of individuals.
- The curriculum is based on a series of topics which include the study of different subjects. Trips are used effectively to promote pupils' interest at the beginning of new topics. Visitors to the school support pupils' appreciation of the variety of roles in society. For example, as part of their crime and punishment topic, Year 4 pupils learned about the rule of law and about the criminal justice system through a visit from a police officer. Teachers make effective links between subjects, for example developing pupils' writing skills in the context of other subjects. A number of themed weeks successfully engage pupils, for example the recent science week, which involved pupils competing to create posters and models to launch the week's activities.
- The curriculum provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school plays an increasingly active part in the local community. Pupils are acutely aware of the needs of others. As well as taking part in numerous fundraising activities, pupils collected toys at Christmas to support the Salvation Army's work. They recently took part in Mass at a local church to celebrate St Patrick's Day, with a Year 6 pupil speaking about the plight of economic migrants, past and present.
- Additional funding to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is used well to provide high-quality support. Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to equal opportunity, ensuring that eligible pupils do not miss out on extra-curricular opportunities. The physical education and sports premium has been used to expand the range of equipment available in lessons. Specialist teaching ensures that pupils receive high-quality provision and that teachers receive training and support to develop their own practice.
- Parents spoken to describe the impact of leaders and their role in bringing about significant improvements in the school's work. They highlight the high expectations of the quality of pupils' work and behaviour as well as the increased setting of homework. They attribute these changes to clear and decisive leadership.
- The local authority has kept a close eye on the school's progress, making termly visits to ensure that the impact of improved teaching is evident in improved outcomes for pupils. It has made sure that the transition from interim executive board to governing body has been smooth, without any loss of momentum and oversight.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body took over from the interim executive board in January 2016. Members of the governing body have the expertise necessary to challenge and support leaders to drive rapid school improvement. A number of members with educational backgrounds ensure that leaders' focus is on pupils' outcomes and well-being.

- Governors have a thorough understanding of their duties, including those relating to safeguarding. They have a good knowledge of the prevailing local issues, including those relating to gang membership, female genital mutilation and radicalisation.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are clear about the process they should follow if they have concerns about pupils' well-being. Staff are appropriately trained, with those responsible for leading safeguarding having had enhanced training. Effective arrangements for reviewing the school's safeguarding and recruitment procedures result in continual refinements to practice. Visitors to the school receive copies of leaflets on the subject of the Prevent duty and about safeguarding in general. This practice is indicative of the high profile given to keeping children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- As a result of the guidance teachers receive from leaders, the quality of teaching is good and improving.
- As a result of the focus it has received, the teaching of writing has improved significantly. Teachers structure lessons well, enabling pupils to practise the skills they will need to complete subsequent work. In preparation for their writing, Year 6 pupils explored ways to use each of the senses to develop suspense in their writing, with one pupil recording, 'I could taste the hazy, musty air overpowering my sensitive taste buds'. Homework prior to the lesson had helped pupils to structure their writing.
- A substantial financial investment has increased the resources available for supporting the teaching of reading. Pupils take home a variety of books, some of which are chosen by their teachers, and others selected by pupils. The teaching of phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they make) is systematic and engaging, enabling pupils to develop familiarity with each sound and the confidence to apply their knowledge to read unknown words.
- The principles of mathematics teaching set out in the national curriculum have been fully embraced. The emphasis on pupils gaining a thorough understanding of concepts before moving on to new learning provides pupils with firm foundations on which to build later. For example, pupils use practical resources to help them understand the concept of ratio and proportion in Year 6.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge enables them to pose questions that require pupils to think more deeply about their learning. Teachers use subject-specific vocabulary accurately and expect pupils to do the same.
- Expectations of the presentation of pupils' work are high. Cursive script is taught throughout the school and is modelled well by teachers. High-quality presentation, both in pupils' folders and in the work displayed in corridors, illustrates the increased pride pupils have in what they do.
- Support staff are deployed according to need, with some providing individual support for pupils with special educational needs or disability, and others leading groups of pupils in lessons. They are well trained and have a good understanding of their role and of the strategies that are effective in supporting pupils' learning. They enable the pupils they support to take part fully in the lesson and to be challenged effectively.
- Work is routinely planned for pupils of different abilities in each class. However, the most-able pupils are not always stretched sufficiently to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They wear their uniform with pride and greeted inspectors with, 'Good morning' without being prompted as they arrived. They demonstrate respect and kindness towards each other. Strong relationships between adults and pupils support learning well.
- A range of strategies is in place to support pupils to develop their sense of responsibility. For example, Year 6 pupils are keen to support pupils in Year 1 with their reading. Year 6 pupils take responsibility for the playground environment at lunchtime, making sure that equipment is looked after properly.
- Pupils understand that they can learn from their mistakes. They are developing the skills to become resilient learners. Their attitudes to learning enable them to make good progress.

- Pupils are familiar with the arrangements for reporting internet content that causes them concern while using the computers in school. They click on Hector, a cartoon character, which prompts them to seek support from an adult. Pupils know that they should think carefully before posting personal details online and are able to discuss the pros and cons of internet access on mobile phones.
- The provision of therapeutic support through the school's 'carefree kids' scheme enables pupils to seek support for any concerns they may have. They refer themselves by posting a note in the box outside the designated room, or are directed to the service to address needs identified by parents and teachers. This provides valuable and effective support, for example for those pupils wishing to discuss concerns about their transition to secondary school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and thoughtful, demonstrating kindness to each other regardless of their background or age. They have a good understanding of how their friends' cultural backgrounds may be different from their own. Pupils have a strong sense of equal opportunity, explaining that all pupils are welcomed despite the strong Catholic ethos of the school.
- Parents value the firm approach taken to addressing pupils' behaviour. They describe how it has improved under the new leadership.
- The school's records demonstrate that behaviour is typically good. Pupils confirm that this is the case and are able to describe the improvement over time. No incidents of inappropriate behaviour were observed during the inspection.
- Exclusion was used effectively towards the end of the previous academic year to ensure that the newly established expectations of pupils' behaviour were fully understood throughout the school community. There have been no exclusions during the current academic year.
- Attendance has been consistently higher than average over recent years. Attendance in the current year continues to be high. This is as a result of the high priority given to the issue. Weekly newsletters celebrate the high attendance of individual classes and provide frequent reminders about the school's strong stance on unauthorised absence.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has been above average for past three years. The proportion has risen each year and the school's assessment information indicates that it will be still higher in 2016.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has increased each year for the past three years and is predicted to increase again in 2016. It has been consistently above average.
- Key stage 1 outcomes have improved steadily over the past three years in reading, writing and mathematics from below average to significantly above it.
- Improvements to pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have been stubbornly resistant to improvement in recent years. In 2015, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in mathematics was above average. The proportions achieving this in reading and writing were broadly in line with the national figures. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels in each subject were below average.
- In 2015, the proportions of pupils making expected progress were above average in reading and broadly in line with average in writing and mathematics. The proportions of pupils making more than expected progress were higher than average in reading, in line with the average in mathematics and below average in writing.
- High proportions of pupils currently on roll are making expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics in most year groups. The school's assessment information indicates that in all year groups, pupils have made more than average progress since the end of the previous key stage in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 5 and 6, in particular, high proportions of pupils are making more than expected progress in writing as a result of the recent focus on the subject.
- The most-able pupils, those who achieved Level 3 at the end of key stage 1, are on track to achieve above age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.

- The small gap that currently exists between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others is narrowing rapidly. This is because the proportion of disadvantaged pupils making more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics is higher than those of other pupils in the corresponding subject.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability currently in school are making strong progress, with a high proportion making more than expected progress. In some cases, these pupils are making more progress than their peers.

Early years provision

is good

- Leadership of the early years provision is good. The coordinator has a clear understanding of how children learn and what they are capable of achieving. She works closely with other adults in the Reception setting to provide stimulating and purposeful activities, well chosen to develop children's skills and understanding. Close observation and assessment of how children are progressing enable any dips in performance to be addressed quickly.
- Many children begin the Reception class with skills and abilities below those expected for their age. Effective teaching ensures that they make good progress, with a higher proportion than average achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year.
- Children are aware of their surroundings and are observant. Noticing the builders working locally, children were inspired to construct a tower using the large blocks in the outside area. Children concentrate well, their interest being sustained by adults' thought-provoking questions. For example, children manipulating objects in the water tray were challenged to explore the range of colours they could see in the water. This enabled them to practise key vocabulary as well as develop their skills of observation.
- Children behave well and get along well with each other. They share equipment and take turns, showing respect for others. Well-chosen activities lead to children tackling them with purpose and interest. Both the indoor and outdoor areas are stimulating, promoting children's learning well and providing a safe environment in which to learn.
- Teaching in the early years is good. On most occasions, adults make the most of opportunities to develop children's language by engaging in meaningful conversation and thoughtful questioning. This challenges children to think more deeply about concepts, to apply their imagination and to use vocabulary they are less familiar with.
- The outdoor area is used well, with a range of activities well chosen to promote children's writing, their motor skills and imagination. Children enjoyed listing their choice of food from the menu provided, and ordering at the 'healthy eating cafe'. The adult supervising capitalised on the opportunity to reinforce phonics knowledge to select the right letters for the beginning and end of words.
- More structured teaching activities challenge children to develop their writing. Children respond well to the teacher's high expectations. The most-able children are able to punctuate sentences correctly using a capital letter at the start, a full stop at the end and with appropriate spaces between words. During the inspection, children wrote sentences to describe the fresh strawberries on their table, describing them as 'sweet' and 'red'.
- Parents receive a weekly newsletter informing them how they can support their child's learning at home. In common with the rest of the school, a number of parents meet with the teacher each week to discuss their child's progress. Parents speak highly of the communication between school and home.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 131418 |
| Local authority | Brent |
| Inspection number | 10009416 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 5–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 323 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Alloysius Frederick |
| Executive headmistress | Dawn Titus |
| Telephone number | 020 7624 1830 |
| Website | www.marycps.brent.sch.uk |
| Email address | admin@marycps.brent.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 27 March 2014 |

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes to the school's leadership since the last inspection. The executive headteacher and associate head of school were appointed in June 2015 following a period of interim leadership arrangements. The majority of teaching staff began their roles in September 2015.
- The school is a member of a soft federation with St Joseph's RC Primary School. The same executive headteacher leads both schools.
- The executive headteacher is a national leader of education. The chair of the governing body is a national leader of governance.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- A section 48 inspection of religious education did not take place at the same time as this inspection.
- The school meets the requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made short visits to all classes, jointly with senior leaders, to observe teaching and learning.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, other senior leaders and leaders of English, mathematics and special educational needs. An inspector met with two groups of staff, one comprising teachers early in their careers.
- An inspector met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors, and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors held a meeting with a group of pupils and spoke to others during visits to lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtimes. They also considered a survey of pupils' opinions carried out by the school council and listened to pupils read aloud.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. They also took account of the school's own survey of parental opinion.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including that about pupils' progress, their attendance and arrangements for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jeremy Loukes, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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