

# St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary School

New Hey Road, Upton, Wirral, Merseyside CH49 5LE

<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 May 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The highly committed and dedicated headteacher, senior leaders and governors have secured improvements in teaching. Their vision and values pervade the school.
- Training and professional development for staff are strong, enabling teachers to improve their practice. As a result, pupils' outcomes are improving.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well so that no pupil is left confused and learning continues at a good rate.
- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points. Those who have been at the school for the majority of their schooling achieve well.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school and their parents agree wholeheartedly.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They want to achieve and show good learning habits in school. They cooperate and collaborate well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and is at the heart of everything the school does.
- Early years provision is also a strength of the school. These children settle quickly, demonstrate a love of learning and make good progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- New assessment systems are at an early stage of development and need time to be fully established across the school.
- The proportions of most-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability achieving at the highest levels are lower than those seen nationally.
- Children's good progress through Reception has not historically been sustained in Key Stage 1 because of a legacy of weak teaching, which has now been phased out.
- Attendance, though improving, remains too low.

## Full report

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

- Swiftly close remaining gaps in attainment at the higher levels for all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, the very few most-able pupils and the small number who have special needs or disability, by:
  - securely implementing the school's new assessment system more precisely across the school, so that teachers' planning sets exactly the right level of challenge for these pupils and others and outcomes exceed expectations for all year groups, especially in writing
  - ensuring that all teachers capitalise on the good start children make in the early years provision so that their entry into and progress through key stage 1 is seamless.
  
- Intensify the school's already strong strategies to ensure that pupils attend school regularly.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has a very clear vision, shared by other leaders and governors, for the school's improvement. This is based on an accurate and honest self-evaluation of the school's work. Since her appointment, just before the inspection that judged the school to require improvement, she has transformed the school through her determination and resilience.
- The headteacher has made many necessary changes, some of them very challenging. Senior and middle leadership teams have been restructured and strengthened and new appointments have greatly increased the school's capacity to improve from a very low base.
- Through all these changes the headteacher has maintained the respect of staff, parents and pupils alike, all of who are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Despite her determination to improve the school, or perhaps because of it, she is never too busy to comfort a child or celebrate his or her success.
- Senior and middle leaders and staff have embraced the very high expectations that the headteacher has set for the school. Processes for holding staff to account for pupils' progress are now much tighter than previously. New, more robust strategies have also been developed to improve further the already good teaching noted in the previous inspection report. As a result, teaching is now consistently good. Several examples of outstanding practice were seen in pupils' books during the inspection.
- Teachers are well supported and challenged to improve their practice. They appreciate the many opportunities that they have to access high-quality training provided by the headteacher herself, by external consultants and through a local cluster of schools. The school can point to a number of teachers whose practice has improved through such support and who are now able to lead aspects of the school's work.
- Senior leaders and governors now have a clear knowledge of the strengths and areas for further development in teaching and in other aspects of the school's work. The school's new, robust tracking systems, put in place by senior leaders, show that, although there are variations between subjects and year groups, most pupils are now beginning to make better progress in most subjects.
- Senior leaders have developed an exciting new curriculum, in order to meet the higher demands of the new national arrangements and the interests, learning needs and aspirations of all pupils, including an even sharper focus on pupils' cultural development. Pupils enjoy the wide choice of sports that they have at breaks and lunchtimes. They say that there is always something to do. Pupils also greatly appreciate visits to places of interest. For example, a visit to the Catalyst Museum in Widnes helped pupils to see how chemistry is important in our daily lives.
- The school has responded positively to national changes in assessment. A new, rigorous system of assessing pupils' progress has been developed and most teachers are now more confident to make accurate predictions about pupils' outcomes. However, the system needs time to be established consistently across the whole school.
- The range of strategies provided by the physical education and sports funding is evident, for example, in pupils' purposeful and active play during lunchtime, which is increasing their enjoyment of regular physical activity. Year 6 and Year 5 pupils also develop leadership skills through acting as play leaders for younger pupils.
- The impact of the school's use of the premium funding is evident, for example in the effective, focused support provided by the funding for pupils' writing (the pupil premium is additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or for children who are looked after by the local authority.) Seven out of the eight pupils supported by the pupil premium funding improved their level in writing last year and made at least the progress expected of them from their starting points.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for development and acts as a strong support and critical friend for the headteacher and senior leaders, whose ambitions they share.
  - Through regular visits to the school, governors know pupils well, showing strong knowledge of the groups that are doing well and those who are not. Governors also comment on the improvements they have observed in pupils' reading skills in assemblies and at church.
  - Governors bring a wide range of professional skills to their work. They have restructured committees and regularly check to ensure that all governors have appropriate skills for their roles. Records of their

meetings show the very robust challenge they make to senior leaders, especially on financial matters. Governors know how the pupil premium is spent and the impact it has had on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors are vigilant in fulfilling their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding arrangements. Risk and health and safety assessments are appropriately completed and child protection procedures are robust. All staff have had 'Prevent' training and are alert to potential risks.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection because of the commitment of senior leaders to providing good-quality training. This is based on regular monitoring of teaching and learning, which has been tailored to each teacher's needs.
- Relationships between pupils and the adults who teach them are very positive. Pupils trust staff so they are confident to answer questions knowing they will not be criticised if they are wrong.
- Teachers take pride in their attractive and welcoming classrooms. Good-quality work completed by pupils is displayed to celebrate their success and show others what is possible.
- Teachers comply consistently with the school's marking policy to give pupils clear guidance on how to correct mistakes in their work. However, a few teachers do not check whether pupils have acted on their advice.
- Teachers check pupils' understanding as their learning progresses. Teaching assistants are deployed well, so no pupil is left confused and learning continues at a good rate.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use questioning effectively, especially prompting and probing to draw out pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding.
- New ways of working in mathematics have encouraged teachers to develop pupils' resilience to try to find ways of solving their own problems, and pupils relish tackling challenging tasks and activities. The school is aware that this practice is not securely in place across all classes, so that all pupils, especially the most able, have opportunities to be stretched by this challenging work.
- Teachers are becoming accustomed to the school's new arrangements for assessing pupils' progress. Most teachers can use the information from tracking systems to plan for pupils' progress, but the system needs time to be established fully across the school.
- Teachers are mindful of the need to support pupils in becoming confident speakers and listeners, given their low starting points in communication skills. Both speaking and listening skills are promoted well by teachers, who give pupils many opportunities to work together and discuss their ideas.
- The teaching of writing is improving. The tools of writing, including spelling and handwriting, are taught methodically. Where tasks in topic work are imaginative and linked to other subjects, pupils have good opportunities to write for a wider range of relevant and interesting purposes. One group of pupils was excited by exchanging letters with the chair of an important public service, who had asked them to carry out a piece of research for the company.
- The children are enthusiastic readers of a wide range of substantial books. They were delighted to discuss their current reading with inspectors and find out what reading inspectors enjoy.
- Some teachers do not grasp opportunities to allow pupils to practise their skills in reading, writing and mathematics in other subjects. They do not routinely model for pupils the steps that need to be followed in order to complete activities confidently and successfully.
- Homework is used effectively for a range of purposes, including practising learning done in school and giving pupils opportunities to research and pursue their interests.
- The vast majority of parents responding to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, express no concerns about the quality of homework and agree that their children are well taught at the school.

## **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' personal development is a strength of the school.

- The school's strong moral ethos and core values support pupils' understanding of British values very effectively. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities to reflect on deep concepts. They relish discussions about spiritual, moral and social questions and apply what they have learned in their daily relationships with their teachers and classmates.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility, for example as Year 6 lunchtime play leaders for younger pupils. They gain an early awareness of democratic values through membership of the school council, and pupils sometimes participate in the recruitment of teachers.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors were clear that they feel very happy and safe in and around school and parents wholeheartedly agree.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They bring very positive attitudes to their learning, being curious and imaginative and eager to know more. Pupils work harmoniously together and persevere diligently with their work. They wear their uniform smartly and take care in the presentation of their work and the tidiness of the school. They arrive on time and well equipped for school and lessons.
- There have been no permanent exclusions in recent years and the school's behaviour policy, consistently applied, ensures that there are few incidents of disruptive behaviour. The number of pupils who are temporarily excluded from school for poor behaviour has reduced steadily this year. Pupils are knowledgeable about all forms of bullying and racism and those who met with inspectors were not aware of any incidents. They were clear, however, that their teachers would take firm actions if any bullying occurred.
- Attendance has improved slightly over the last year, but remains below average. The school has spared no effort to secure better attendance and works very hard to support and challenge a small core of families whose children are persistently absent. Their rates of absence are improving but remain too high.
- Pupils said that if they were troubled about anything, the first adult they would turn to would be their class teacher, who would always be there to help.
- Through the personal, social, health and economic education, pupils are well aware of the risks of using the internet and know what to do to keep safe. The school uses its physical education and sport funding wisely to increase pupils' physical well-being, for example through purposeful, supervised lunchtime play. The school works with a wide range of outside agencies to support pupils' emotional and mental health.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- School assessment information shows that pupils who have spent the majority of their time at the school perform better than those who have joined the school at different points. Results can be distorted by the relatively high numbers, in this small school, of pupils arriving and leaving outside normal times.
- Many pupils join the school with significant deficits in their communication skills. As a result of the school's timely actions, for example in employing a speech therapist for those pupils in greatest need, early years standards have risen from a very low base over the last two years. The proportion of pupils who achieved a good level of development in 2015 was well above average.
- Most children make generally good progress from these starting points, although some historically found the change from Reception to Year 1 difficult initially and this slowed their progress across key stage 1. Nevertheless, in the current Year 3 cohort only 20% of this group had achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception, so they make good progress from their starting points.
- Performance in the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) was above the national average in 2015, with rising trends for both boys and girls. Pupils' overall standards in reading were in line with the national average, reflecting the impact of the sharply focused teaching of phonics provided by the school.
- Standards of writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2015 were significantly below average, but close to the national average in reading. Boys' standards and those of pupils who have special educational needs or disability were broadly in line with national averages. Gaps in attainment also narrowed for disadvantaged pupils in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' work in books and the school's rigorous checks on the quality of teaching show teaching and learning in the school to be good. Nevertheless, it has not been so previously for some pupils in key stage 1, who are now in key stage 2. Consequently, these pupils have had a legacy of lower standards, which the school is working hard to eradicate.

- The school's records of the progress of current pupils suggests that in Year 2 about three quarters of pupils are set to meet age-related expectations in reading and about two thirds of pupils are expected to do so in writing. In mathematics, four out of every five pupils are expected to meet the standard.
- At key stage 2, outcomes are more consistently strong, because good and better teaching is more firmly established. Most measures of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics were close to or above national averages in 2015. Low-ability pupils achieved better than the group nationally, as did disadvantaged pupils.
- Achievement at the higher levels was not as strong in 2015, but the very few most-able pupils exceeded the progress expected of them in reading. Rates of more than expected progress in reading and writing were close to or above national averages for the most able and gaps narrowed for those of low ability. The most able pupils did not make as much progress in mathematics.
- In Year 6, where the teaching has been consistently good, information from the school's new assessment system suggests that the vast majority of pupils currently in the school are expected to reach the standard in reading and mathematics and the majority of pupils also in writing. The school knows that more work needs to be done to improve pupils' writing skills and to ensure that variation across subjects is swiftly reduced and that higher proportions of pupils exceed expectations.
- The attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils who have special educational needs or disability were broadly in line with the group nationally. The school recognises that some of these pupils could make better progress, especially in reading, and is reviewing its support for these pupils.

## Early years provision

is good

- Many pupils join the school with significant deficits in their communication and social skills. The proportion of children who have achieved a good level of development by the end of Reception has been above the national average for the past two years. This is because astute changes in leadership and staffing in the early years have resulted in teaching that is never less than good. This has led to children making good progress from their starting points.
- The school works well with outside agencies to secure support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. This is particularly the case for those children who have specific language needs. Leaders have also spent the early years pupil premium funding wisely on a social and communication programme led by the school's English leader, and weekly support from a speech and language therapist. As a result, these pupils are making better progress in speaking, listening and understanding.
- Both inside and outside areas have been improved since the previous inspection to give children a wider variety of more stimulating activities. Leaders have created a calm and purposeful atmosphere where children can explore and learn safely. The early years provision meets all statutory welfare requirements.
- Children take turns and work cooperatively, behaving well and following adults' instructions. Children are very keen to learn and work with concentration. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of the children. The strongest teachers ensure that work is challenging, for example asking children to remember all the sounds in a story. All teachers make sure that pupils have a variety of opportunities to consolidate their learning, but teachers sometimes miss chances for children to apply it to more complex tasks.
- Most pupils settle quickly to work and play. They love listening to their class teachers' enthusiastic reading and enjoyed joining in with actions and words from a poem. The children learn to take early responsibilities, for example as lunchtime prayer leaders.
- Detailed learning journals track children's progress carefully, demonstrating their good progress in writing and number.
- Regular progress meetings between staff in the Nursery and Reception ensure that assessment information is shared and used to guide teachers' planning to cater for the needs of each child.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105090
<b>Local authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012091

This inspection 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>	225
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Patrick Regan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Ralph
<b>Telephone number</b>	051 677 4088
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.smaaawirral.com">www.smaaawirral.com</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27–28 February 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is almost twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at other than the beginning or end of the school year is higher than average.
- The school houses and staffs a local authority resource base for key stage 1 pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. No pupils from the school were attending the base at the time of the inspection.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been significant changes to staffing since the previous inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, some of which were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' written work during these observations.
- Inspectors looked at 26 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 45 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and spoke with 10 parents at the start of the school day.
- It was not possible to access pupils' responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. Inspectors spoke instead with pupils in formal interviews and lessons and informally at lunchtime and breaktimes. They also considered the school's own surveys of pupils' and parents' views.
- Meetings were held with school staff, including the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector also met the chair and members of the governing body, as well as a representative of the local authority.

## Inspection team

Susan Wareing, lead inspector

John Daley

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector



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