

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Back Lane, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside L23 4UA

Inspection dates

27–28 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Despite considerable changes to staff in this very small school since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have created an aspirational culture that is driving up the quality of teaching and improving outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have established rigorous procedures for checking and developing the quality of teaching. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects as they move through the school. However, at times pupils, particularly those of middle ability, are not consistently challenged to do their very best.
- Subject leaders have worked to ensure that all staff have the skills and knowledge needed to maintain high-quality teaching.
- Leaders and staff have worked together to develop a curriculum that inspires pupils to learn. Pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills across a range of subjects, including history, geography and art.
- Staff know all the pupils and their families well. The vast majority of parents appreciate the dedication of staff to ensuring that pupils feel safe and thrive in a caring and supportive environment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. It is supported by a strong Christian ethos. Pupils are taught to value and respect each other and treat each other the way they would wish to be treated.
- Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and during educational visits. As a result, pupils behave extremely well. The excellent attitude of pupils to learning has a positive effect on the good progress they make.
- Leaders have created a culture where staff work collaboratively within school and with other schools. Teachers use these opportunities to share good practice and to deliver a rich and varied range of experiences for pupils that enrich their learning.
- Teaching and leadership in the early years is of the highest quality. Children settle quickly and make very strong progress from their starting points. They are very well prepared for Year 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further so that it matches the highest-quality teaching within the school, allowing more pupils, particularly those of middle ability, to make rapid progress by:
 - making sure there is an increased level of challenge and that a higher proportion of pupils are working at a greater depth across a range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to staffing in this very small school. This led to some variations in the quality of teaching and the progress pupils made. Leaders and governors have not allowed this to get in the way of their drive for excellence. New teachers have been brought on board quickly. They have quickly adopted a positive team spirit and a shared drive to ensure that pupils have the best possible start to their education. New appointments have strengthened leadership further. The appointment of an assistant headteacher has added renewed rigour to the senior leadership team. The swift actions to arrest a dip in pupils' outcomes, coupled with the many strengths in leadership beyond senior status, are clear signs of the outstanding quality of leadership in the school. There is excellent capacity to improve the school further.
- Leaders and staff work exceptionally well together to establish a culture of high aspirations and expectations for all the pupils in their care. They want the very best for pupils and leave no stone unturned in removing any barriers to pupils' learning and personal development.
- Leaders monitor the progress of groups and individuals very closely through their meticulous analysis of assessment information. They routinely check that effective actions are taken to secure and sustain high standards of progress and attainment. In doing so, they are able to quickly identify the pupils who need to catch up and the pupils who need to be challenged further. As a result, some pupils are making good progress from their starting points. This is strongest in classes for the older pupils.
- Leaders identify when pupils need additional help very quickly. They work closely with a range of external agencies to access training for staff. Leaders also provide tailored support for pupils and their families. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported. The additional funding for special educational needs is allocated very effectively to support the specific needs of this group. As a result, these pupils typically make more progress from their starting points than other pupils nationally.
- Middle leaders have an accurate understanding of their areas of responsibility. They monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects very rigorously. This is highly effective in ensuring that pupils achieve well in a range of different subjects. Subject leaders share their strong subject knowledge with school staff. They know about new strategies in teaching and learning and ensure that their school colleagues are well informed about best practice. This includes checking on the assessment of writing in other schools in the local area to ensure an accurate understanding of the new standards in pupils' writing. This work plays an important role in raising the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils across the whole curriculum.
- Leaders and staff have worked diligently to develop a rich and exciting curriculum. This is reflected in pupils' work books, which are of a good standard. Leaders seek out opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences and make sure pupils have the same rich opportunities as others who might attend a larger school. For example, staff work closely with other local schools to provide opportunities for pupils to develop a range of

skills that ensure they are ready for their next stages in learning. The recent science week provided rich and varied activities, including investigations with water. Pupils had the opportunity to work together collaboratively and develop their interpersonal skills with a larger community. This not only enhances their learning but ensures that they are ready to work with larger groups away from their small family at school.

- Traditional British values underpin the behaviour policy within the school. Pupils treat each other with the utmost respect and understand their place in society.
- Leaders ensure that the broad range of activities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are enjoyed by the pupils. Consequently, pupils have aspirations to be the best they can be. Cultural events and visits, such as a visit to the Liverpool Philharmonic, provide rich experiences, igniting a love of learning. Pupils who spoke to the inspector said, 'I would have been sad if I had missed the Philharmonic today. It was just magical.'
- Leaders use performance management to hold all teachers to account for the pupils' achievement. Targets set for teachers are clear and measurable. They link closely with the school's development plan and the development of the teacher's own knowledge and skills. There is a strong culture of professional dialogue, training and support. As a result, teaching is improving strongly so that it is consistently good and most pupils are challenged to achieve the high standard.
- Leaders allocate the additional funding for the very small number of disadvantaged pupils effectively to overcome any barriers to learning. Leaders provide enrichment opportunities and monitor pupils' achievements closely. This works well. Disadvantaged pupils often outperform other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have allocated the additional funding for sports effectively to secure access to high-quality coaching for pupils and quality training for staff. This has allowed pupils to participate in a wide range of different sports and has led to their success in competitions between local schools.

Governance of the school

- The governors bring a wealth of experience to the leadership and management of the school. They share the vision for sustained improvement and tackle effectively any challenges that come their way.
- The governing body ensures that it is kept well informed of current issues in education by regularly accessing high-quality training opportunities and by working closely with other governing bodies.
- Governors are aspirational for the pupils of St Mary's. They are deeply committed to continually striving to ensure that teaching is of the highest quality.
- Governors have an accurate view of the school's provision and its impact on the achievement of pupils. They provide a high level of challenge to school leaders and are rigorous in validating the information they receive through robust monitoring.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Leaders have established a positive culture that promotes the importance of the safety and well-being of all pupils. Robust and up-to-date training ensures that all staff understand and follow the school's systems to protect pupils who may be at risk of harm.
- Leaders work closely with families and outside agencies to support the most vulnerable pupils. As a result, strong relationships have been established with parents, who appreciate the care, guidance and support provided by the staff to meet their children's needs.
- Online safety is given a high priority. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet effectively.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe and well cared for. They have confidence in the adults in school and pupils say that any concerns that they have will be addressed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Highly positive and supportive relationships between pupils and adults help pupils to develop into confident learners. As a result, most pupils make sustained and consistent progress throughout school.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge allows them to accurately assess pupils' understanding. They quickly identify when pupils need additional support to catch up. During a mathematics lesson, a small number of pupils had not grasped the concepts from the previous day. Staff used a range of equipment to address misconceptions, refine pupils' thinking and explain different strategies they could use. Pupils spoken to said, 'This activity is hard but teachers make it fun, and I can do it now.'
- Teachers' skilful questioning challenges and extends pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively. This is particularly true for the older pupils in school. As a result, pupils make swift progress.
- Activities match the needs and abilities of the majority of pupils well. Pupils give clear explanations about the calculations and strategies that they use to tackle a range of mathematical problems. Pupils said, 'You have to know your tables really well to do these questions.' As a result, pupils make better progress.
- Teachers' expectations have created a culture of learning and support. Pupils work well together to share ideas and discuss the strategies they need to tackle the tasks set by the teacher. Pupils said that they appreciate the advice that they get from teachers as it helps them not to make the same mistakes again. Evidence in books shows that it also improves the quality of pupils' work. This has led to an increase in the variety of vocabulary that pupils use in their own writing.
- Teachers inspire their pupils with imaginative ideas. Work in pupils' books, and on displays, is of the highest standard. The novel 'War Horse' by Michael Morpurgo was used to ignite pupils' imagination. Older pupils produced some wonderful thought-provoking letters written as though they were a soldier arriving on the battlefield. 'The mood of joyful troopers turned quickly into apprehensive silence' is just one example of their excellent responses to the task.

- The small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very successfully within lessons. Staff receive specific training about how to support pupils' individual needs. This allows pupils to make rapid progress from their starting points and to contribute during class discussions effectively.
- The most able pupils are challenged effectively across a range of subjects, and as a result, their high rates of progress are sustained.
- Although teachers meet the needs of most groups well, they do not always provide enough challenge to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils are working at a greater depth across a range of subjects, particularly those of middle ability.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. There is an exceptionally strong atmosphere of mutual respect starting in Reception and continuing throughout the school. Pupils feel safe and cared for in school. They are proud of their achievements and of their school.
- The vast majority of parents commented very positively about the care and support that their children receive from leaders and staff. Parents value the strong sense of being a family. Excellent relationships and manners are apparent throughout the school. Pupils know each other well and feel valued and cared for.
- Leaders provide opportunities that enrich the curriculum through a number of trips and visitors to school. As a result, pupils appreciate the rich diversity around them. One pupil said, 'We are all part of one big world.'
- Pupils contribute enthusiastically to the school and the local community. They are proactive in organising events to raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves. They are proud of their achievements. 'Although we are small, we can make a big difference and make the world a better place to live.'
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They talk confidently about safety on the internet and the dangers of sharing information on social media. This is shared through eye-catching posters and signs around school created by pupils to remind others how to keep safe and what to do if they are worried or concerned.
- Pupils care for each other. They are all friends and know each other very well. One pupil said, 'If ever you are upset, someone will make you feel happy again.' Pupils spoken to said, 'There is no bullying in school but friends do sometimes fall out.' They have confidence in the adults around them and know that they will get help and support for any worries if it is needed.
- Pupils enjoy learning and the challenges that teachers provide. Planned opportunities for pupils to work cooperatively allow them to discuss how to solve problems and to support and encourage each other. They relish the opportunity to show resilience by not giving up even if the task they face is difficult.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs and activities held before and after school and during lunchtimes. Sports coaches and authors work with the school's pupils to

enhance the opportunities during lessons and beyond. Pupils are particularly proud of their sporting achievements in swimming and cricket.

- Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously and are positive role models for the younger pupils in the school. They help to organise coffee mornings for the local community and fundraising events to provide support for others less fortunate than themselves.
- Leaders work closely with the local secondary school, and as a result, the older pupils are excited about the move to their new schools in September. Pupils speak confidently about being prepared for the challenges ahead.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They move around school in a calm manner and are focused when learning. Staff set high expectations of behaviour and pupils are polite, well-mannered and respectful of others. Any low-level disruption in lessons is rare, but when it does occur, it is tackled appropriately by staff.
- Attendance overall is broadly in line with attendance seen nationally. Leaders provide very specific support for a small number of pupils and their families who miss too much school. As a result, the attendance of these pupils is improving rapidly. Attendance for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. This has led to their stronger progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils have maintained high standards of attainment in both key stage 1 and key stage 2 over a sustained period of time compared to other pupils nationally.
- The school's own assessment information shows that an increasing proportion of pupils currently at the school are reaching the standards they should when compared to other pupils nationally with the same starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A very large proportion of pupils in Year 1 reach the expected standard in the national phonics screening check. Pupils who do not achieve the expected standard are supported well by staff and typically reach the expected standard by the end of Year 2. Pupils accurately apply their knowledge of phonics in their spelling to strengthen their writing. This is evident in the work seen in pupils' books and on displays around school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make more progress than typically expected nationally from their starting points. This is due to the high-quality support that they receive from well-trained staff who understand pupils' individual needs.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils in the school is very small. Leaders use the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils very effectively. Their needs are recognised quickly and they receive well-targeted individual support. As a result, a large proportion of this group typically out-perform the non-disadvantaged pupils nationally by the end of key stage 2.
- There are a small number of pupils who do not reach the nationally expected standard

at the end of key stage 1. Accurate analysis of their achievements ensures that they receive a range of additional support strategies to help them catch up in Year 3. As a result, they make rapid progress from their starting points in key stage 2 towards reaching the expected standards at the end of Year 3.

- A small number of the most able pupils are effectively challenged through high-quality teaching. As a result, they use and apply their skills and knowledge, work at a greater depth and reach the highest levels of progress and outcomes. However, teachers do not always provide enough challenge to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils are working at a greater depth across a range of subjects for other groups of pupils such as those of middle ability.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leadership of the early years is outstanding. Teachers provide a range of high-quality activities that capture the imagination of the children and foster a love of learning.
- The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development is well above the national average. A small proportion of children exceed a good level of development and this number is increasing. Children are extremely well prepared for Year 1.
- Leaders work closely with other schools to share good practice and to check their views on children's progress. This results in leaders ensuring that high standards in the quality of teaching are sustained.
- Leaders accurately assess children as they start school. Children enter Reception with knowledge, skills and understanding that are broadly typical for their age. The vast majority of children attended a range of settings in the local area prior to starting school. Leaders work closely with these providers and parents comment how quickly their children settle into Reception.
- Teachers use high-quality ongoing assessments to identify swiftly where children need to be challenged and supported. Adults are highly skilled in using questions to encourage the children to refine their thinking and deepen their understanding. Teaching is consistently of the highest standard.
- The judgements that leaders make on children's achievement are supported by evidence gathered from a wide range of sources. Information is detailed and accurately identifies the next steps in children's learning. Evidence clearly shows that the next steps are acted upon and achieved by the children.
- Parents contribute to the information gathered through photographs and emails. Parents spoken to during the inspection praise highly the quality of care, guidance and support that children and their families receive from staff. They know how to support their children's learning at home, and this contributes to the excellent progress the children make.
- Teachers engage the children's interests and capture their imagination through a range of well-thought-out activities. Adults model very positive relationships and this is reflected in how the children treat each other.
- Children are extremely happy. They develop good relationships and positive learning behaviours. They work confidently on their own and work well with each other. They

talk enthusiastically about their learning and apply their knowledge and skills in independent tasks.

- The teaching of phonics is highly effective and children enthusiastically engage with the activities. They apply their knowledge in their own writing across a range of activities. This was seen in the invitations that the children were writing to each other for the castle ball, which they are planning together with staff. Children, dressed as kings and princesses, confidently used punctuation and familiar spellings correctly.
- Children use their phonic knowledge well. As a result, they apply these skills correctly in their own writing and decode unfamiliar words successfully, for example 'golden' to describe the king's crown.
- Leaders and staff have received training to support children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these children make extremely good progress from their starting points.
- The small number of disadvantaged children are extremely well catered for and typically outperform non-disadvantaged children nationally.
- Safeguarding arrangements in the early years are effective and children are taught how to keep themselves safe through clearly established routines. All statutory welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	104927
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10036719

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Kelly
Headteacher	Peter Hennessy
Telephone number	01519 244447
Website	www.stmaryscatholicps.co.uk
Email address	admin.StMarysLittleCrosby@schools.sefton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school with mixed-age classes except for the Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage and all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support for their special educational needs is below average.
- There are no pupils supported by an education, health and care plan for special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- The school offers breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and other members of staff.
- The inspector met with the chair of governors and a member of the governing body and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector conducted a learning walk accompanied by the headteacher and observed teaching and learning in all classes.
- The inspector listened to a number of pupils read and met with a group of pupils during the day.
- Inspectors also spoke with a number of parents at the school gates and took account of 28 free-text comments on Parent View. There were 49 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to all aspects of the school's work, including minutes of governing body meetings, assessment information, self-evaluation, school improvement planning, the allocation of additional funding, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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