

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Fleetwood

London Street, Fleetwood, Lancashire FY7 6EU

Inspection dates

7–8 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

- The headteacher is determined and driven. In partnership with her able deputy headteacher, and with the full support of governors, she has continuously improved the quality of teaching and learning over the last three years.
- St Mary's is vibrant, purposeful and cohesive. It is a place where pupils want to learn and staff morale is exceptionally high.
- Governors are highly skilled. They bring much experience and knowledge to the school, which is helping to secure continuous improvements in all areas of provision.
- Over the last three years, at the end of key stage 2, pupils have made outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes disadvantaged pupils. At the end of Year 6 in 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics was in the top 1% in the country.
- Pupils in key stage 1 make good progress in all subjects. Their attainment at the end of Year 2 is rapidly improving.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together to make learning exciting and memorable. They know pupils well and have very good relationships with them.
- Pupils benefit from a curriculum which stimulates their imagination and captures their interests.
- Phonics teaching is good. The proportion of Year 1 pupils secure in their phonics skills and knowledge has improved each year for at least the last three years.
- Children in the early years, and pupils in Year 1, make good progress. However, too few opportunities are available for them to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum.
- The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their appreciation of British values, is good overall. Pupils' appreciation of the culturally diverse nature of British society is still developing.
- Pupils attend school regularly. They are courteous, respectful and hard working. Those who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe and well cared for.
- Most parents and carers are of the view that their children are happy, safe and making good progress.
- Provision for children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes in the early years and Year 1 by providing more opportunities for children to refine and develop their writing skills.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by providing opportunities for pupils to enhance their awareness and appreciation of the culturally diverse nature of British society.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The leadership and management of the school are highly effective. The headteacher's determination to move the school from requiring improvement to good has paid off. Some aspects of the school, including some teaching in key stage 2 and outcomes in mathematics, are outstanding.
- The headteacher's partnership with the deputy headteacher, who is also the Year 2 teacher, is highly effective. With the support of a knowledgeable governing body, the school is moving steadily along the road to realising the ambition of all staff, that of becoming outstanding.
- Leaders are exceptionally well organised. This has helped them to address all areas for improvement from the previous inspection. They are aware of all relative weaknesses and are planning to address them. All staff who spoke with inspectors, including those new to the profession, indicated that professional development is constantly improving their practice. They describe the culture of the school as 'open' and say that they are confident about sharing their ideas and learning from each other.
- Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are thorough. As a result, teachers know exactly what they need to do to enable them to perform to their absolute best. They know their strengths and areas for development. Performance management and monitoring the quality of teaching are part of the same process. Leaders set challenging targets which are linked to improving outcomes for pupils.
- Senior and middle leaders responsible for improving the quality of teaching, including in English and mathematics, have done a good job in 'boosting' outcomes for pupils. For example, additional mathematics activities have been very popular. Monitoring spelling and handwriting and ensuring that teachers take a consistent approach to teaching phonics have led to significant improvements in pupils' writing and phonics skills and knowledge. Subject leaders new to their role are well supported and are becoming increasingly effective in improving the quality of teaching in their various subject areas.
- Linking different subjects, and developing pupils' appreciation of the fact that no subject stands alone, permeates the curriculum. Good grammar, punctuation and spelling are promoted as much in geography as in English. Mathematics is promoted well in science. Subjects such as art and design technology are currently linked to the creation of an aeronautically themed float, to be paraded at the forthcoming Fleetwood Festival.
- The school uses additional funding, including for disadvantaged pupils, highly effectively to raise standards for eligible pupils. For example, in 2017, at the end of Year 6, pupils made outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence, including the school's own assessment information, indicates that differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are rapidly diminishing. Additional funding for those who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively and supports pupils' good progress.
- The work carried out by staff to promote pupils' moral, social and cultural development

is good. The religious education coordinator is currently implementing a plan of action to extend pupils' spiritual understanding beyond Christianity, to include a full appreciation of the major world faiths. Pupils regularly raise funds for good causes, at home and abroad, including for a hospice and international aid agencies. They are currently raising money for a defibrillator for the school. Pupils enjoy art and the theatre and playing various string and percussion instruments.

- Pupils know their rights and enjoy putting democratic principles into practice. This they do regularly, as elected members of the school council, school captains and class representatives. Recently pupils put a motion forward, which was granted, for goalkeeper gloves. Their application for additional football kit is being considered. Pupils know how to be good citizens and understand the principles of fairness and equality. However, their understanding of the culturally diverse nature of British society and of the communities which extend beyond Fleetwood is limited.
- The use of the primary school sports fund is closely monitored. The physical education (PE) coordinator has precise records which show high levels of participation in sports and the positive impact this is having on developing pupils' skills. The vast majority of pupils attend at least one after-school club. Funding is spent very effectively, enabling the school to offer a wide range of sports, including gymnastics, dance and sports skills (striking and fielding, throwing and aiming at targets). Pupils participate in a range of competitive activities and have attended events such as the 'Aqua Splash' festival, 'Kids Cup' tournament and the key stage 2 'Multi-Sports' festival.
- Almost all parents who spoke with inspectors and completed the school's own surveys of parents' views were very positive about all aspects of the school, including their children's safety, progress, well-being and the leadership and management of the school. However, a minority of parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and sent in text messages during the inspection, expressed concerns about their children's safety and bullying. Senior leaders are acutely aware of these concerns and are eager to reach out to any parent who is not completely satisfied with their children's experience at the school.
- Despite the school's 'requires improvement' status prior to this inspection, it has received 'light touch' support from the local authority. This is in recognition of the immense improvements it has made, particularly over the last two years. The school is 'outward facing' and has provided support to other schools within the Fleetwood cluster. Recently support from the local authority has been effective. This includes working closely with the school to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' attendance.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well. Their knowledge comes from their subject responsibilities, regular visits to the school and the succinct reports they receive from the headteacher. Governors are highly ambitious, support and challenge the school in equal measure, and have set their sights on working with senior leaders to move the school to outstanding.
- Governors supported the headteacher in tackling teaching that was not good enough. Quite correctly, they know that all teaching is now either good or better. Governors recognise excellence in teaching, which they are prepared to reward.

- Governors are trained well. Several have many years' experience in education, which they bring to their roles. All know exactly how additional funding is spent. This includes the pupil premium funding the school receives for disadvantaged pupils. Governors know that progress for these pupils was outstanding at the end of Year 6 last year.
- Governors have a good appreciation of safeguarding matters and are well trained in this area. All governors have undertaken online 'Prevent' training, in line with the government's aim of stamping out radicalisation and extremism.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff and governors are trained well and keep themselves up to date with the latest government guidance on keeping children safe in education. Staff take prompt action on safeguarding matters and work with a range of professionals. Designated safeguarding leaders are trained to a high standard.
- The school's central record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children is up to date and contains all the necessary information. This ensures that risks to pupils, especially the most vulnerable, are minimised.
- All staff have a good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding matters. They know precisely what to do if a pupil approaches them with a concern relating to their safety or welfare. The family-learning mentor is in the process of training to become a designated safeguarding leader. This is in recognition of her crucial early intervention role and her work with families and the local community.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- All aspects of teaching, learning and assessment are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Some teaching is outstanding and has, as such, supported pupils' outstanding progress in some classes. Teachers use information on pupils' prior learning effectively to plan different activities which ensure that almost all pupils make at least good progress.
- All teachers consistently apply the school's feedback and assessment policy. Their approach to giving pupils feedback on their work is enhancing pupils' understanding of how they can improve their learning, not only in reading, writing and mathematics, but also in subjects including science, religious education and history.
- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils and are not hesitant when it comes to dealing with tricky subjects. This furnishes pupils with the skills to debate, present arguments clearly and master the use of the English language.
- Subject matter, particularly in English, generates a sense of urgency and excitement in lessons. This was exemplified in a Year 6 English class where pupils were debating whether or not it was right to remove John William Waterhouse's painting, Hylas and The Nymphs, from a Manchester art gallery. Pupils demonstrated a surprisingly high level of maturity as they debated and, as happened in the Manchester gallery, placed their notes inside an empty picture frame. Typically, pupils commented: 'The picture shows nudity which is not suitable for young children.' A further comment was: 'I think that it should stay up, it's a product of its time and an important historical artefact.'

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge in mathematics. They insist that pupils try their hardest, show exactly how they have worked out their answers and think about patterns and facts about different numbers. This was evident in a mixed Year 1 and 2 class where pupils were engaged in differing activities. Pupils finding mathematics difficult worked with a teaching assistant to add different amounts of money, while other pupils worked on different problem-solving activities. At the end of the lesson pupils confidently discussed what they had learned, as well as 'what went wrong'. They demonstrated remarkable resilience as they identified how they could avoid mistakes in future work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. This was evident in a Year 3 class where pupils were learning about horizontal, vertical, parallel and perpendicular lines. They enjoyed standing up and using their arms to represent the various lines, while pupils working with the teaching assistant developed their understanding of the difference between parallel lines and pairs of lines which fan out from a narrow base.
- Teachers utilise time in class effectively. This was the case in a Year 4 English class where pupils engaged in various activities, aiming to improve their use of figurative language. As they moved around the classroom they were tasked to find the meaning of words using a thesaurus, write extended sentences, including using commas, come up with interesting similes and 'magpie' ideas. Pupils were very eager to share their ideas and similes, which included 'as ambitious as an ant' and 'as good as someone who gives money to a beggar'.
- Good teaching in other subjects, including science, provides opportunities for pupils to engage in practical experiments and investigations, apply their scientific understanding and practise their writing skills when recording their findings.
- In Year 1, pupils' writing skills, though rapidly improving, are not as strong as in other year groups. This is because there are too few opportunities for them to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of what they need to do to improve their learning and are becoming increasingly resilient. Some are risk takers. As such, they experiment with ideas and learn from their mistakes.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors indicated that bullying is rare. Younger pupils said that if bullying happens, it is always 'sorted out'.
- Pupils learn about safe and unsafe situations through the personal, social, health and citizenship aspects of the curriculum and from visitors from various services, including the fire brigade and police. They say that they feel safe and confident about talking to any member of staff if they have any concerns.
- Older pupils say that racism is when 'someone treats another person badly because of their skin or religion'. They are adamant that neither racism, nor homophobic bullying, ever happen in the school.

- Pupils know how to stay safe when online. They know that cyber bullying can take place on any device connected to the internet. Older pupils who spoke with inspectors said: 'You should always talk to your parents if you are not sure whether a website is age appropriate.' All pupils know not to share private information or install 'rogue programmes'. Pupils have workshops on e-safety and say that teachers always remind them to be careful when surfing the internet.
- Pupils know the importance of staying fit, both mentally and physically, and eating healthily. They regularly participate in various sporting and physical activities, including football, dance and gymnastics. In addition, they enjoy learning French and singing in the choir.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and enjoy having a real say about what happens in the school. They take on their roles in earnest as members of the school council and eco team and as head girl/boy. Older pupils enjoy the responsibilities afforded to them as 'hotpotters', who encourage younger pupils to observe dining etiquette. This includes good manners and polite conversation, cleaning up and using cutlery correctly. All pupils enjoy helping teachers and other staff. They open doors without prompting and welcome visitors warmly.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 look forward to their residential learning opportunities in the Lake District. Here they can engage in team building and problem-solving activities and develop their leadership skills.
- Pupils enjoy attending the breakfast club, where they can catch up with their friends, play various table-top games, dance, play football and have a hot breakfast. The club provides a positive and structured start to the school day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- St Mary's is a calm and purposeful school where pupils are interested in learning and discovering new things. All pupils, and children in the Reception class, wear their new smart uniforms with pride and are very respectful towards staff and each other.
- Pupils make sure that their school is well looked after and take care to ensure that their work is neat and well presented. A small number of pupils receive extra support to help them manage their own behaviour. Any disruptions to learning are minor and swiftly and effectively dealt with by staff.
- Pupils behave sensibly when moving around the school between lessons and play safely during break and lunchtimes. They enjoy competing for 'star of the week' and collecting 'dojos' for good behaviour and good attendance. Pupils relish assemblies, where they can celebrate their peers' attendance and achievements. Pupils' attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is currently average. School records show that pupils' behaviour has improved over time and is now consistently good.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They are attentive. They respectfully listen to their peers' ideas and are eager to answer questions. Pupils know the school motto, 'Working Together For The Good Of Each Other' and are very familiar with the 'St Mary's way', which includes not being distracted by the 'silly' behaviour of others.

- Almost all parents who spoke with inspectors were of the view that behaviour is good and bullying rare. They also said that their children are safe. The school's own surveys of parents' views coincide with these findings, as do the views of staff and governors. Inspection evidence, including a review of the school's records and discussions with pupils, indicates that the school deals effectively with rare incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- St Mary's is a much-improved school. Pupils' achievement in both key stages 1 and 2, and children's achievement in the early years, are good and better than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders and teachers use sophisticated systems to track and monitor pupils' progress across the school in various subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. National data and the school's own data indicate that the majority of pupils make at least good progress. Those who have SEN and/or disabilities, or barriers to their learning, also make good progress. This is shown in pupils' 'steps to success' folders, which indicate that they progress well from their low starting points.
- In 2017, at the end of Year 6, pupils' progress was outstanding in reading and writing and was in the top 1% of all schools nationally for mathematics. The proportion attaining the expected standard in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling was above average.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 was not as good as at the end of key stage 2. However, a sizeable proportion of pupils in this group had SEN and/or disabilities. School data and inspection evidence indicate that these pupils, now in Year 3, are making good progress.
- The school's own data indicates that almost all pupils are reaching the expected standards for their age in all subjects and classes. Pupils are making accelerated progress in Years 1 and 2, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Their reading records indicate that they do so frequently, both at school and at home. They read with good expression. Least-able pupils use their phonics skills well to sound out and read unfamiliar words.
- At the end of Year 1 in 2017, a below-average proportion of pupils were secure in their phonics skills and knowledge in the national screening check. However, phonics teaching is consistently good. As a result, outcomes in phonics have improved each year for the last three years. The school's own data indicates that the majority of pupils in Year 1 have already acquired the skills necessary to be secure at the next phonics check in the summer term.
- Mathematics is creating a 'buzz' of excitement across the school. Pupils relish opportunities to compete with peers to improve the accuracy and speed of their calculations. This is because mathematics is taught exceptionally well across the school by highly skilled teachers who are trained well. They keep track of new developments, focus on enhancing pupils' problem-solving skills and provide challenging work to improve pupils' depth of knowledge and understanding. As a result, in almost every class, all pupils are making at least expected progress.

- Pupils make good progress in writing, as evidenced by the very high standard of work in their books. Pupils are highly skilled at writing for different purposes and use a range of literary techniques to present arguments on topical subjects forcefully. They are also skilled at research and writing biographies of famous authors, scientists and inventors. Many pupils are making better than expected progress. However, pupils' progress in writing in Year 1 is not as good as in other year groups.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2017, disadvantaged pupils made outstanding progress in reading and writing and were in the top 1% of all schools in mathematics. This pattern is repeated across the school, where these pupils make the same good progress as their peers. At the end of Year 6, disadvantaged pupils' attainment was not as good as that of other pupils nationally. However, performance differences are rapidly diminishing.
- Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. The SEN coordinator is trained well and works in partnership with various specialists to ensure that pupils, including those who have education, health and care plans, get the support they need. Interventions are tailored to meet pupils' specific educational needs. Monitoring information indicates that interventions are effective. They help pupils to access the curriculum and make good progress.
- The school has an increasing number of keen, confident and very able high-attaining pupils. Almost half attained the higher standard in mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2017, which was well above average. An average proportion attained the higher standard in reading. Pupils' performance in writing was not quite as good.
- The most able pupils are regularly presented with challenging work in class through 'chilli challenges' in mathematics and extension activities in English. In science, pupils have dissected a sheep's heart and carried out various investigations. As learning leaders, the most able assist their peers in class when needed.
- Pupils make at least good progress in a wide range of subjects including science, art, computing, PE, design technology, mathematics and English. As a result, they are well prepared for their learning in Year 7.

Early years

Good

- All aspects of the leadership and management of the early years provision, including teaching, learning and assessments of children's skills and abilities, are good. The early years leader, though an experienced teacher, is new to her role, having started this term. Highly effective support from senior leaders is helping to ensure that provision remains good. For the last four years, outcomes for children have continually moved forward on an upward trajectory. Inspection evidence indicates that provision is continuing to move in the right direction.
- Children eligible for additional financial support make the same good progress as their peers. The increasing number of children who speak English as an additional language soon settle into the Reception class. They too make as good progress as other children.
- Good transition and induction arrangements are in place to ensure that children settle into school life quickly. Staff visit children's nursery settings to ascertain children's needs. They also visit families at home before their children start at St Mary's. This

ensures that any special educational needs are identified early.

- Children's knowledge and understanding on entering the Reception class are below that found typically for their age. Their skills are particularly weak in literacy. However, they make good progress. In 2017, an average proportion of children attained a good level of development and were ready for their learning in key stage 1.
- Children are cooperative. Almost all play sensibly when working on their own or with their peers. They enjoy learning in the garden-centre role-play area, where they can write shopping lists and use their number skills to buy equipment to grow plants.
- Learning outdoors develops children physically and provides opportunities for them to develop basic skills. For example, in order to cross the rhyming trip-trap bridge, children must state a rhyming word in response to the teacher's question. This engages children in phonics work and develops their balance.
- Staff have a secure understanding of how young children learn and make sure that both indoor and outdoor provision are exciting, stimulating and clearly linked to the different areas of learning. Children enjoy making Valentine cards, honing their fine motor skills while picking up small balls with chopsticks, using computers, reading, measuring different shapes, weighing and engaging in 'messy play'.
- The early years curriculum is enhanced by a range of visitors working in different professions who help to bring learning to life and provide children with new and interesting experiences. For example, firefighters and nurses have visited to explain their roles.
- All parents who spoke with inspectors were highly positive about all aspects of early years provision. Typically, they say that their children are making good progress and enjoy coming to school. Parents are satisfied that their children are safe and well looked after.
- Staff look after children well, making sure that all welfare requirements are met. Safeguarding is effective. The same well-established procedures in operation in key stages 1 and 2 are in operation in the early years.
- The behaviour of most children is consistently good. Occasionally, a few children struggle to focus on their learning. In response to this, additional behaviour strategies and staff are deployed to support children and help them to manage their own behaviour.
- Children learn well with adults. Most are very responsive and enjoy learning new things. This is evident during phonics sessions, where children are engaged in various activities to improve their reading, writing and ability to recognise letters and sounds. The most able children regularly read words such as 'said', 'thirst' and 'party', while others can write words such as 'fan' and 'bug'. Least-able children can sound out most words of the alphabet. One or two can write simple words such as 'bat'. However, most children are still in the very early stages of writing. In addition, too few opportunities are available for them to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum.

School details

Unique reference number	119623
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10042444

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharon Jones
Headteacher	Ann Kowalska
Telephone number	01253 878445
Website	www.st-marys-fleetwood.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	bursar@st-marys-fleetwood.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 January 2016

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been several staffing changes. Four new teachers have been appointed, including the early years leader and a teaching assistant. The governing body has been restructured to include several new members, including the chair of governors. The ground floor of the school has been remodelled to include additional teaching and learning areas.
- St Mary's School is a smaller than average-sized primary school. An above-average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and in receipt of support through the pupil premium funding.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A small but increasing number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils who have education, health and care plans or a statement of special educational needs is just below average.

- All children in the Reception class attend full time. A small number of Year 1 pupils learn alongside the Reception class children.
- The school runs a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body and formed part of the inspection.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils and sessions aimed at helping pupils learn to read. Two observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised in class and separately with senior leaders.
- Inspectors read 34 text responses submitted by parents during the inspection and met, both informally and formally, with parents. Letters from parents were also taken into consideration. Inspectors considered 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 14 members of staff and 12 pupils were also considered.
- A meeting was held with seven governors, including the chair of the governing body. Meetings were held with various leaders, including those responsible for English and mathematics. Meetings were also held with leaders responsible for assessing pupils' learning and progress, the early years provision and provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. A meeting was held with the family-learning mentor and the religious-education coordinator.
- A meeting was held with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included the school's checks on the quality of teaching and reviews of its own performance, development plans, information about pupils' progress, records of pupils' attendance and behaviour and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

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