

Inspection of a good school: St Marie's Catholic Primary School

Bigdale Drive, Northwood, Kirkby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L33 6XL

Inspection dates:

9–10 June 2021

Outcome

St Marie's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Marie's know that staff want them to do their best in everything. Pupils show that they know this by behaving well and working hard. They are polite. For example, they hold doors open for adults and smile at visitors. Pupils are doing well in learning about a wide variety of subjects, including mathematics and reading.

Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that they feel safe in school. They said that pupils behave well. Teachers sort out any misbehaviour straight away. Pupils told the inspector that staff take good care of them. They made comments like, 'We know that teachers will never let us down'.

Bullying does not happen often. When it does, pupils know that leaders and other staff quickly deal with it. They also know that teachers are there to help them with any concerns or worries.

Pupils take part in many activities outside the classroom. Some of these had to stop because of the pandemic, but leaders are bringing them back. Pupils can go on trips to places like The Beatles Museum. They also live out the Christian faith of the school by raising money for Catholic and other charities.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders provide a curriculum which covers all the subjects of the national curriculum. They make sure that all pupils have access to all subjects. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the high proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged. Leaders provide other activities to deepen pupils' knowledge. For example, pupils visit places like a local art gallery. There are clubs catering for a range of activities like sports or knitting. Pupils have a chance to be student councillors or well-being ambassadors.

There is a logical order to pupils' learning in reading and mathematics. Leaders adapt the curriculum well so that pupils with SEND can learn what they need. Teaching assistants provide effective help in class for these pupils. Pupils also have extra help outside class to understand learning they may find difficult.

Leaders organise reading well. They have further developed the reading curriculum to strengthen pupils' fluency and their love of reading. In key stage 2, for instance, teachers use interesting, high-quality texts to focus on key features of reading, like building vocabulary. This helps pupils to read confidently and with good understanding.

Children start learning about words and sounds soon after they enter the nursery. In the Reception class, staff plan phonics effectively. They teach the children the knowledge that enables most of them to remember the sounds that they are learning. This helps them to build up what they need to know before they start Year 1.

Most pupils in key stage 1 learn phonics well. Staff give extra help if pupils need to catch up. However, a few pupils in key stage 1 who find reading more difficult sometimes read books that are too difficult for them. Staff do not give them time to become familiar with the sounds that they have learned before moving on to a harder book. This means they do not build up their fluency and confidence strongly enough.

In mathematics, leaders have made clear what pupils will learn and when. Staff start teaching children mathematics in the early years. They communicate well with children to increase their mathematical vocabulary. By the Reception Year, some children can do hard calculations like 20 minus 16. Teachers are effective at checking that pupils remember what they have learned. As a result, pupils know more and remember more as they progress through the school. Pupils in key stage 2, for example, know their multiplication tables securely.

In other subjects, leaders have suitable plans for what pupils should learn and when. They made some adjustments that have enabled pupils to catch up on learning that they missed because of the pandemic. Teachers have strong systems to check that pupils remember what they learn. Pupils, mostly, build their knowledge well. Occasionally, however, for example in geography, this does not happen because the teaching does not follow the planned curriculum closely enough. Leaders have realised this and have planned training to ensure that staff consistently teach knowledge in the right order.

Leaders and other staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. There are not many incidents of bullying, but leaders manage them swiftly. Pupils behave effectively in class and show positive attitudes. They do not disrupt lessons with poor behaviour.

Staff who spoke with the inspector said that senior leaders consider staff's well-being and enable them to have a balanced workload. They said that leaders are very supportive and approachable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders keep detailed records of any safeguarding concerns about pupils. They see to it that pupils get the help that they need. Leaders move quickly to bring in outside services, such as social care, if any serious issues are raised.

Staff have had effective training. They know the signs that show that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They know how to report any concerns.

Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that they feel safe. Leaders teach pupils about different risks and how to stay safe. For example, they teach pupils how to use the internet safely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Overall, the teaching of phonics is well sequenced and organised. However, teachers sometimes provide younger pupils who find reading more difficult with books that are too hard for them. Pupils have not embedded their prior knowledge of phonics before reading these books. Consequently, they do not read with confidence and fluency. Leaders must ensure that teachers give these pupils enough opportunities to practise the phonemes that they are learning to enable them to become fluent readers.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 18–19 May 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	104466
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10194690
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Coakley
Headteacher	Sheelagh O'Keeffe
Website	www.stmariescps.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed. Four governors have left the governing body. Two new members have been appointed and others are currently being sought.
- The school's last inspection under section 48 took place in February 2020. The next inspection will take place by February 2025.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff. He spoke with members of the governing body, representatives of the local authority and a representative of the archdiocese.
- The inspector reviewed the school's website and a range of school documents. These included the school's self-evaluation document, its improvement plan, curriculum documents for a variety of subject and records about behaviour, safeguarding and bullying.

- The inspector spoke to a group of pupils about their experiences in school. He also spoke to pupils informally at lunchtime.
- The inspector gathered the views of a small number of parents and carers during the inspection. He evaluated three responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and spoke with one parent on the telephone. He also analysed 21 responses to the staff survey.
- The inspector looked in depth at reading, mathematics and geography. He spoke with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils. He also heard pupils reading to familiar adults and talked to pupils about their reading.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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