

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

Back Lane, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside L23 4UA

Inspection date: 29 September 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy belonging to this small and friendly community. They are happy in school. They know that staff care about them. Pupils get on well together. They said that staff deal with any rare incidents of bullying quickly and well. Pupils feel safe.

Pupils respond well to leaders' high expectations for their behaviour. Pupils reflect the school's values by treating others as they would want to be treated themselves. They are polite and respectful. Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and at playtimes.

Pupils are keen to play their part in the school community. They are proud to represent their classmates on the school council. They enjoy acting as woodland warriors and mindfulness monitors. Pupils carry out these leadership roles enthusiastically. They care about the environment and look after it well.

Pupils know that leaders listen to them and take on board their ideas. This helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to feel fully involved in school life.

Leaders expect all pupils to achieve well. Pupils leave the school as confident readers and able mathematicians. However, unavoidable disruptions to staffing have resulted in pupils' knowledge being uneven within year groups and across the broader curriculum.

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

The new headteacher has dealt with recent instability in staffing well. She has effectively inducted new staff. Staff who are new to the school understand leaders' expectations. Along with existing staff, they appreciate leaders' actions to support their workload.

However, the impact of significant staffing changes on pupils' experiences of school cannot be underestimated.

Some subject leaders have designed their curriculums within the mixed-aged classes well. They have carefully considered how to build pupils' knowledge over time. These subject leaders have ensured that teachers have the guidance and training that they need to deliver their subject curriculums effectively. This includes teachers who are new to teaching and those who are new to the school. In these subjects, teachers use assessment strategies well to find out what pupils already know. This helps teachers to plan the next steps of learning. Pupils, including pupils with SEND, readily recall what they have learned in these subjects.

Other subject leaders' work to improve the curriculum is at varying stages. This includes the curriculum for children in the early years. In the absence of substantive staff, some subject leaders have had limited opportunity to develop staff subject knowledge. This means that teachers do not deliver the curriculum as effectively in some subjects as they do in others. Children in the early years, and older pupils, do not build their knowledge across the curriculum as well as they should.

Leaders have made sure that most staff, including those who are new to the school, are trained to teach pupils to read using the well-established phonics curriculum. Pupils read books that match the sounds that they are learning. However, not all staff deliver the phonics curriculum equally well. Added to this, some children who are struggling to read do not always get enough practice. This hinders how quickly some pupils build secure phonics knowledge.

Older pupils enjoy talking about books that they have read and their favourite authors. However, some aspects of the reading curriculum are not coherently ordered. This means that pupils do not always build on reading skills they have learned before.

Leaders are adept at identifying the additional needs of pupils with SEND, including in the early years. Teachers provide effective support for these pupils in class. This helps pupils with SEND, and their classmates, to learn without interruption.

Leaders carefully consider pupils' wider development. They have ensured that pupils have access to books and resources which help them to explore the rich diversity of modern Britain. Leaders also make sure that all pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. These include visits, visitors and sporting clubs. Pupils take an active role in supporting others. They raise money for charity and are keen eco-champions.

Governors are supportive of senior leaders' plans to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. They are beginning to challenge leaders more effectively to help them to achieve this.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that reading, history and art and design may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff, including those who are new to the school, are well trained in safeguarding. They ensure that staff understand and carry out their safeguarding roles and responsibilities diligently. This includes providing support for pupils' emotional health and well-being.

Leaders follow up any concerns swiftly. They work with a range of external agencies to keep pupils safe. They ensure that pupils and their families get the timely support that they need.

Pupils are taught to keep safe when they are out and about in the community. Pupils also learn how to keep themselves safe when working or playing online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The phonics programme is not delivered consistently well by all staff. This slows the pace at which some pupils build their phonics knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all staff apply their training to deliver the phonics programme equally well. Leaders should also ensure that the broader reading curriculum is well ordered across all classes.
- The revised curriculum is at an early stage of implementation in some subjects. In other subjects, curriculum improvements are ongoing. Over time, pupils have not learned and remembered subject knowledge as well as they could have in these subjects. Leaders should finalise these subject curriculums to ensure that pupils build a rich body of knowledge across the curriculum.
- Some leaders do not have the expertise to lead their curriculum areas well. They have not developed staff subject knowledge in their subjects sufficiently. This has been compounded by staff absence. Pupils' learning is uneven in these subjects as a result. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders are well trained to develop the curriculum in their subjects. In turn, subject leaders should ensure that they help staff to implement subject curriculums consistently well.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns

about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2017.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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

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| Unique reference number | 104927 |
| Local authority | Sefton |
| Inspection number | 10240688 |
| 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 | 100 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Dominic McNabb |
| Headteacher | Kerry Scott |
| Website | www.stmaryscatholicps.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 27 and 28 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. A new chair of the governing body has also been appointed.
- At the time of the inspection, three of the four classes were being taught by temporary teachers owing to unavoidable staff absence.
- This school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Its last section 48 inspection took place in November 2018.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school.

- An inspector spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. They talked with curriculum leaders of these subject areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils. Inspectors also spoke with leaders from other areas of the curriculum.
- An inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers shared through Ofsted Parent View. An inspector also spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload. Inspectors also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They reviewed documentation and spoke to leaders and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Jackie Stillings, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Adrian Martin

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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