

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

Pilch Lane, Huyton, Merseyside L14 0JG

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2024

Outcome

St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy in school. They described it as 'a loving, caring and safe community'. Pupils are welcoming, polite and respectful. They are proud of the contribution that they make to their wider community.

Pupils know that all staff expect them to behave well. They are attentive in lessons and focus on their learning. Pupils with more complex needs get the help that they need to manage their feelings. This helps pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to learn without distraction.

Pupils work hard to meet staff's high expectations of their academic achievement and wider development. The school has a clear vision to prepare pupils for the next stage in their lives. Pupils, including those with SEND, typically achieve well across a range of subjects.

Pupils benefit from a well-designed enrichment programme. They enjoy the varied range of experiences available to them, such as after-school clubs and opportunities to take part in performances. Pupils relish taking part in the school's 'Spotlight' offer, which encourages them to discover and strengthen new talents.

Through their many leadership roles, pupils contribute to decision-making and teamwork within school. For example, pupils who act as reading ambassadors recommend books to their peers and work with staff to choose new novels.

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

The school has constructed an ambitious and well-thought-out curriculum for pupils, including those with SEND. Reading has been placed at the heart of every curriculum subject. In all subjects, the important knowledge that pupils should learn, from Year 3 to the end of Year 6, has been clearly identified. It is delivered in a logical order. This helps to ensure that new curriculum content builds on previous learning. The school has given

careful thought to how pupils can connect their learning across different units of work. This deepens pupils' knowledge in each subject studied.

Teachers have accessed a wide range of training. They draw on findings from educational research to keep their subject knowledge up to date. The school makes sure that teachers know how to deliver subject curriculums effectively. Teachers are adept at checking what pupils have learned. Teachers use this information effectively to address any misconceptions quickly. This helps pupils to build well on what they already know.

The school prioritises the teaching of reading. Enticing reading areas in classrooms help pupils to develop a love of reading. Pupils enjoy listening to the stories that staff read to them at the end of each day. Most pupils read with fluency and understanding.

The school has implemented a whole-school approach to teaching phonics for pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. They make sure that pupils who are struggling get effective extra help quickly. However, a small number of pupils find reading difficult, and they are not catching up quickly enough. This is because the school lacks sufficient decodable books for pupils to be able to practise their reading often enough.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. It works well with external agencies to ensure that these pupils receive timely, high-quality support. Staff successfully adapt the delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. For example, pupils with SEND can use the microphone on their devices to dictate their work.

Pupils listen carefully to adults. They understand the school rules and form caring and positive relationships with their teachers and other adults. Pupils work well with each other and try their best in lessons. They engage in their learning with enthusiasm.

The school prioritises good attendance. Reasons for pupil absence are known. There are clear and effective strategies in place to continue to improve attendance. Consequently, most pupils attend school regularly.

The school has innovatively designed its personal development programme. Particular attention is spent on pupils' safety, health and well-being. Pupils value the extra support that is available to them from the learning mentor, should they require it. Pupils understand and celebrate differences between people.

Members of the governing body provide valuable support and challenge to the school. They understand their statutory duties well. Staff are highly positive about the support and consideration that they receive for their workload and well-being. This includes time and support to carry out their roles effectively. Staff are proud to be part of the school team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read do not receive sufficient practice in reading books that match the sounds that they know. This means that gaps in their phonics knowledge are not addressed in a timely manner. This limits their ability to read fluently. The school should ensure that it has sufficient decodable books to enable pupils to read on a regular basis.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2014.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	104482
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10321242
Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	467
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Rawsthorne
Headteacher	Rebecca Wilkinson
Website	www.smmj.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in February 2023. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before the end of 2028.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and members of staff. She met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.

- The inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the archdiocese. She also met with the school improvement partner.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils from Year 3 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and reviewed a sample of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including records of governing body meetings, leaders' self-evaluation of the school and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at playtime and spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. She considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Lisa Littler, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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