

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Back Lane, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside L23 4UA

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 January 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' individual personalities are allowed to shine at this small, rural school. They are confident, enjoy coming to school and are very happy. Pupils said that their teachers are caring. There are positive relationships between pupils and staff.

Pupils said that they appreciate being in a small school like this. They feel that it helps them to form closer bonds with other pupils. Fall outs are extremely rare. Pupils are sensible and feel safe.

Since the last inspection, the school has raised its expectations for what pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can achieve. Pupils are achieving particularly well in their learning of phonics. However, the school still has some work to do to clarify what children should learn in the early years.

Pupils take great pride in the variety of meaningful responsibilities that they can undertake. For example, the woodland warriors maintain a nearby wooded area and put food out for the birds.

Pupils have access to wide a range of extra-curricular opportunities that include art, drama and sports clubs. These are well attended. Pupils also take part in local competitions. They appreciate the additional curriculum trips and residential visits that the school organises for them. Pupils take part in many charitable activities such as foodbank collections and coffee mornings.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced further instability in staffing. Nonetheless, it managed this period well. During this time, the school was still able to prioritise improvements to the delivery of its phonics programme, which was an issue identified during the last inspection. The school's effective actions have led to a high proportion of pupils meeting the most recent Year 1 phonics screening check.

Staffing has now stabilised. Permanent staff have returned from periods of absence. The school has now driven forward most other necessary curriculum changes at pace. Many subject curriculums have either been redesigned or adopted recently. The school has ensured that most subject curriculums clearly identify the crucial knowledge that pupils need to know. This is starting to help teachers to deliver subject content in a logical order. It is also helping teachers to carry out more effective checks on what pupils have learned.

The curriculum changes – while still relatively new – are already having a notable impact on what pupils know and remember over time. However, the school still needs to give some further thought to how the delivery of some subject curriculums

should be adapted to cater for pupils in mixed-age classes. This is so that pupils do not unnecessarily repeat learning that they have already secured.

The school has taken some steps to develop the early years curriculum since the last inspection. It has now broadly outlined the expectations for children's learning each term. However, the school still has more to do in this area. Other than in phonics and mathematics, the school is not clear about the precise knowledge that it expects children to learn. This leads to too much variability in what children are taught. As a result, children are not as well prepared for learning in key stage 1 as they could be.

The school fosters a genuine love of reading and makes it a high priority. Books are given pride of place around the building. Pupils develop their knowledge of authors and stories. They enjoy reading books that help them to learn more about the topics that they are studying, such as those about the Ancient Egyptians and the Mayans.

Children learn phonics through the school's chosen programme as soon as they start in the Reception Year. Staff receive appropriate training and expertise in this programme. They teach phonics consistently well. The school makes sure that the books that pupils read are suited to the sounds that pupils know. The school provides excellent, highly focused levels of additional support to pupils who need extra help with learning to read. This means that the vast majority of pupils quickly become fluent, confident readers.

The school has started to develop new approaches to evaluate how well staff are implementing curriculum changes. However, in a few subjects, these approaches need further refinement. This is so that the school can intervene more swiftly to address some deficiencies in how well some subject content is currently being delivered.

The school quickly identifies pupils who may have additional needs. It ensures that pupils with SEND receive effective support in their learning. These pupils achieve well.

The school caters particularly well for pupils' personal development. Pupils develop a strong understanding of how to look after their own mental well-being. They know how to develop safe, positive relationships with others. They know how to stay safe online. Pupils show tolerance and respect for people's different backgrounds. They learn about fundamental British values. Older pupils have a secure knowledge of democracy and its foundations in ancient civilisations. Pupils at this school are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

The school encourages positive attitudes to school attendance. Pupils enjoy coming to school and do so regularly. Pupils show an equally positive attitude to their learning. In most classes, most pupils engage well. They follow classroom routines and play nicely together during social times.

Staff appreciate the efforts of leaders to consider their workload. They value that leaders consult them on any proposed changes to policies and procedures.

Governors provide appropriate levels of challenge. They carry out their statutory duties effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not precisely identified what children will learn in many parts of the early years curriculum. This means that children do not build the foundations for future knowledge coherently. The school should develop the early years curriculum further so that staff are clear on the intended knowledge that children should acquire and at what point.
- In some subjects, the school is in the early stages of establishing systems to evaluate the delivery and impact of new subject curriculums on what pupils know. This means that some variability in how the school curriculum is taught is not addressed as quickly as it could be. The school should develop more robust approaches to evaluating the delivery of some curriculums and how well these are helping pupils to build their knowledge over time.
- In a few subjects, the school has not sufficiently considered how curriculum content should be taught to pupils in mixed-aged classes. On occasion, this means that some pupils repeat learning that is already secure. The school should provide further curriculum guidance so that teachers can deliver new content more effectively to pupils of different ages in the same class.

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 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	104927
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10289870
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	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Daniel Corbett
Headteacher	Kerry Scott
Website	www.stmaryscatholicps.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 September 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new chair of the governing body has been appointed since the last inspection.
- Owing to unavoidable staff absence, most classes have been taught by temporary staff for much of the time between this and the previous inspection. Substantive staff have returned this academic year.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Catholic primary school. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in November 2018.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history and mathematics. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector observed pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors. Inspectors also talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their wider experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Liz Davidson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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