

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Margaret Mary's Catholic Infant School

Pilch Lane, Liverpool, Merseyside L14 0JG

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 November 2024

Outcome

St Margaret Mary's Catholic Infant School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending St Margaret Mary's Catholic Infant School. Positive and caring relationships are central to the work of the school. This helps pupils feel safe.

The school expects pupils to do well so that they are ready for the junior school when that time comes. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy learning new things. They work hard and try their best in lessons. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), typically achieve well in a range of subjects.

From the moment children enter the early years they are encouraged to follow the school's rules. Pupils throughout school understand what is expected of them. They follow the rules to the best of their ability. For those that may struggle with this, individualised support is offered. As a result, pupils behave well and school is a calm space with little disruption to learning.

The school provides pupils with a varied programme of activities and experiences beyond their academic learning. Visits and visitors help bring the curriculum to life. Pupils value leadership roles, such as school and eco council. They provide opportunities for pupils to contribute to decision making processes. The Year 2 residential visit develops pupils' confidence and problem-solving skills. These activities help to prepare pupils for life after the end of key stage 1.

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

The school has developed a well-ordered curriculum. This allows children from the early years and pupils throughout key stage 1 to build their knowledge securely over time. Teachers explain new learning clearly. They regularly check to make sure that pupils have learned what was intended. Changes the school has introduced, particularly to support writing, are having a positive impact. Most pupils achieve well.

Throughout the school, staff support children and pupils to develop their speech, language and communication in a variety of ways, including signing. They model clearly the vocabulary and sentence structure that they wish pupils to use.

The school has prioritised the teaching of early reading and phonics. The programme begins as soon as children enter the Reception classes. All staff have been trained to deliver the phonics programme well. However, for those pupils who find reading more difficult, the support in place is not helping them to catch up as speedily as they could. This hinders how well some of these pupils are able to use phonic strategies to develop reading fluency.

Pupils access a wide range of quality texts to promote a love of reading. Stories are shared and enjoyed. The school supplements these with a range of different activities such a 'Stay and read' sessions with parents. Despite this, pupils' understanding of stories that they had read was not as developed as it could be.

The school supports pupils with SEND extremely well. It accurately identifies how pupils' barriers to learning can be overcome. Where pupils need something more individual, this is provided without delay. The introduction of the 'Harmony and Connect' provision allows for bespoke support to be delivered to those pupils who require it. Lesson adaptations mean that pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

From the Nursery Year onwards, effective systems that are common to both the infant and junior school, are in place to support attendance. When attendance falls below an acceptable level, the school works with families to provide the right support and challenge to bring about improvement.

Promoting pupils' personal development and in particular, ensuring that pupils are ready to make the move to the junior school, is threaded through all aspects of school life. Pupils learn about the differences between people and families in age-appropriate ways. The transition programme the school has developed means that pupils are well supported, both socially and academically, for this next step.

Staff say the school is 'like a large family'. They feel valued and are appreciative of the considerations that the school takes concerning their well-being and workload including, for example, changes to the school's marking policy.

Governors use their considerable experiences to contribute to the school's ongoing development. Despite some degree of turbulence in leadership in the last academic year, the actions that leaders have taken has meant that the school has been able to sustain the quality of education it provides.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils who are at the early stages of reading do not receive the targeted phonics interventions that would allow them to catch up quickly. This hinders how well these pupils develop their reading fluency. The school should ensure that the support given to pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge enables them to catch up more quickly.
- The actions the school has taken to foster a love of reading amongst pupils are not as effective as they could be. This prevents some pupils from developing a deep understanding of books that they have read. The school should look at ways in which it can deepen pupils' understanding of the books they read for pleasure.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness 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	104481
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10347885
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	399
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Clare Ferguson
Headteacher	Lisa Maddocks
Website	www.stmargaretmarysinfant.com/
Date of previous inspection	9 th January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- An acting headteacher was appointed in January 2024.
- Two acting deputy headteachers have been seconded to the school on a job share basis since June 2024.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in December 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place before the end of 2028.
- The school makes use of one alternative registered provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other members of staff. She also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, a representative of the local authority and a representative from the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at 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 considered the views expressed by parents and carers in their responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She spoke with parents as they brought their children to school at the start of the school day.
- The inspector also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Pat Speed, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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