

Inspection of St Marie's Catholic Primary School

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

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 October 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending their welcoming, friendly school. They thrive in the nurturing atmosphere. They come in every day with a smile on their face, right from when they start school in the early years. Pupils feel that they are part of a loving family where everyone knows them well. They know that adults always have their best interests at heart.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. However, too many pupils do not reach these aspirations because the newly designed curriculum is not delivered effectively across all subjects.

The school encourages pupils to become responsible citizens. Pupils show tolerance and respect for other people. Many pupils attend the wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, including sporting competitions and festivals. Pupils benefit from the school's focus on making sure they are always ready to learn. This includes an emphasis on eating well and engaging in physical activity at lunchtimes.

Pupils understand the school rules and strive to adhere to the principle 'ready, respectful, safe'. The atmosphere in school is calm. Pupils also behave well at less structured times, such as breaktimes. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong.

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

The school has worked with commitment and drive to make recent changes to its curriculum. This new curriculum is broad and ambitious for all pupils. The school has considered its disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), when designing its curriculum. The curriculum is clearly sequenced so that pupils build on prior learning in most subjects. Under the previous curriculum, the school's published test results in reading and mathematics were significantly below the national averages in 2023 and 2024. The revised curriculum is now clearly sequenced so that pupils build on prior learning in most subjects.

The school has made the early identification of pupils with SEND a priority. Staff are trained in how to adapt lessons, where necessary, so that pupils with SEND are able to access the same curriculum as their peers. Most pupils with SEND make good progress.

Teachers check pupils' learning and address misconceptions within lessons. However, the school's systems for assessing how well pupils learn the current curriculum are not consistently applied. This means that the gaps in pupils' learning arising from the previous curriculum are not identified and addressed as urgently as they might be. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should and are not prepared fully for the next stage of their education.

Pupils make a strong start in learning to read. Children in the Nursery Year are well equipped to learn to read through their immersion in stories, songs and rhymes. Staff deliver the phonics programme skilfully across the Reception Year and key stage 1. This

means that most pupils read with confidence and fluency by the end of key stage 1. However, historically, this strong start was not continued into key stage 2. The school's revised reading curriculum is in the very early stages of being introduced. The impact on pupils' reading in key stage 2 is not yet fully realised.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and pupils respond well to these. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They listen politely to each other. Pupils' attendance was low but has improved recently. The school tracks individual pupils' attendance closely. It does everything that it reasonably can to help pupils and their families overcome any barriers that impact on school attendance. The school actively promotes the importance of good attendance and punctuality for all pupils. This is making a positive difference. More pupils are in school on time every day than previously.

The school contributes well to pupils' wider development. It is passionate about providing opportunities for pupils that may not be available to them otherwise and ensuring that there is access for all. Pupils learn about the different types of relationships at an age-appropriate level. They learn about different cultures and faiths. They understand that people may be different to them, but they agree that everyone should be treated with equal respect. The school prioritises preparing pupils to be responsible citizens of the future, for example through raising money for local charities. It raises aspirations for pupils through visits to local universities and sharing information about different careers.

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to leadership and governance. The school has made changes to many areas, including the curriculum and the approach to managing behaviour. Staff have been well supported through these changes. They feel that the school has their well-being at the forefront of any decisions. Governors have provided strong oversight, support and challenge to the school on its journey to improve the quality of education for all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some of the revised subject curriculums are not well established and there is variability in how well they are implemented. As a result, pupils do not consistently learn as well as they should in those subjects. The school should ensure that the revised curriculum is securely embedded and consistently implemented to enable all pupils to know and remember more over time and achieve as highly as possible.
- The school's revised approach to assessment is not consistently understood and implemented across the school. This means that gaps in pupils' learning that have developed over time are not identified and addressed as urgently as they should be.

The school should ensure that assessment systems are securely embedded and consistently applied so that pupils catch up quickly and develop increasingly secure knowledge and skills across the curriculum.

- The school's revised reading curriculum beyond early reading and phonics is in the very early stages of being implemented. Pupils do not build successfully on their phonics knowledge to develop strong higher-order reading skills such as comprehension. Until very recently, there was limited access to a wide range of texts to encourage pupils to read for pleasure. The school should ensure that the revised reading curriculum effectively supports pupils across the school to read widely, frequently and with understanding.

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	104466
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10347879
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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tony McGuinness
Executive headteacher	Matthew White
Website	www.stmariescps.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- This is a Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The previous section 48 inspection took place in February 2020. The next inspection will be within five years.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

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

- The inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During this inspection, the inspectors met with the executive headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and while in lessons.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents and carers.
- The inspectors also spoke to subject leaders and viewed examples of pupils' work in a range of other subjects.
- The lead inspector observed pupils in Year 1 to Year 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- The inspector reviewed key documents, including the school's self-evaluation, school action plans and monitoring records.

Inspection team

Liz Davidson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Niamh Howlett

Ofsted Inspector

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