

St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104482
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	336316
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Barry Jones

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	451
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Rawsthorne
Headteacher	Mr K Mahoney
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent approximately 50% of the available time looking at learning. They visited 19 lessons and saw a large majority of the class teachers; they also held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils; and talked to parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at documents such as the school development plan and records for the monitoring of pupils' progress. The school's policies and other documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils were scrutinised. There were 143 responses to the parental questionnaires which were analysed. Inspectors also examined questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively the school is raising standards and achievement in writing and mathematics
- what is the quality of teaching and how well teachers use assessment data to meet the needs of all pupils
- how well more-able pupils, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress
- how good is pupils' cultural development and how well the school promotes pupils' understanding of the wider United Kingdom and international community.

Information about the school

St Margaret Mary's is a large junior school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is greater than in most schools, but the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is smaller. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is a little above average. The school has been awarded Activemark, Artsmark Gold and Healthy Schools Status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good, improving school. Pupils achieve well as a result of the good teaching, backed up by strong leadership. Their personal development is also good. This is because of the positive, caring ethos of the school that pervades all that it does and the high quality of care given by staff. Parents and carers value the work that the school does for their children and are overwhelmingly supportive.

Results dipped in 2007 and partially recovered in 2008. The new headteacher has raised expectations and has determinedly led the drive to raise standards. This has been successful. When considered over the last three years, attainment is broadly average. However, the rising trend means that standards in 2009 were above average. Standards in mathematics improved from being below average in 2008 to being above average in 2009. This has been accomplished by making mathematics a whole-school focus, allied to better use of data to identify underperformance and robust support and challenge for teaching. The school is on track to maintain these higher standards in 2010. The quality of teaching is good. All teachers manage their classes well and pupils come to lessons willing to learn. They behave well and make a positive contribution to their learning. In the minority of lessons that are no better than satisfactory there is a lack of pace and teachers do not use data sufficiently well to match work to pupils' needs. Subsequently, there is a lack of challenge. There is effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and, consequently, they progress well.

The needs and interests of the individual child are central to the work of the school. The weekly checking that the school does to ensure that each pupil is safeguarded is exemplary. This contributes significantly to pupils feeling very safe in school. Some weaknesses in administration mean that safeguarding is not outstanding overall. For example, investigation by inspectors confirmed that all staff have received relevant training in child protection procedures but the school does not systematically record such events. The rich curriculum helps to motivate and stimulate pupils. The school is not complacent and is seeking to increase opportunities for pupils to be creative. The school has recently increased its number of computers. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects is not yet well established.

The school is an integral part of the local community. Its own contribution to promoting community cohesion locally is outstanding. There are very strong links with the church and other local groups. The school is working hard to forge links with the wider community and to promote pupils' understanding of other cultures; these aspects are now good. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses resulting from rigorous self-evaluation. Given the track record of improvement over the last year and the strong leadership, capacity to improve is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the administration of safeguarding is secure, including that accurate records are kept for the training of teachers in child protection matters.
- Ensure that satisfactory teaching is improved to be at least good and that effective use is made of assessment data to match work accurately to pupils' needs.
- Provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills in a range of subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In 2009 Year 6 pupils made good progress from their broadly average starting points to attain above average standards. There were no underachieving groups. The performance of more-able pupils improved markedly on previous years. More pupils attained the above expected Level 5 in English and mathematics than in most schools. In lessons, pupils respond enthusiastically and contribute significantly to their own learning. Most enjoy their lessons. Observations in lessons, scrutiny of books and the school's analysis shows that writing standards are improving as a result of more focus through the 'Big Writing' approach. Above average standards in mathematics are being maintained in classes. Pupils respond well to opportunities to discuss work with talking partners. The deployment of teaching assistants has recently been reviewed. Currently, they make a positive contribution to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Visitors to the school regularly comment on the polite and courteous way in which they are greeted by the pupils. St Margaret Mary's is a harmonious school and incidences of bullying are very rare. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and there are numerous links with the local community, particularly through the church. They have a good understanding of healthy living issues. This is reflected by the awards of Healthy Schools Status and Activemark. Pupils feel very safe; in questionnaires distributed for this inspection the great majority of parents and carers, and pupils, replied that pupils are safe. The school takes very robust actions to encourage high attendance and the percentage of persistent absentees is below average. Attendance is better than for similar schools, but in line with the national average. Numeracy and literacy skills are improving and are now good, but pupils' ICT skills are underdeveloped. Overall, pupils' economic well-being is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Where teaching is good or outstanding it is characterised by high levels of engagement by pupils, effective use of support assistants and a good pace. In an outstanding Year 6 science lesson, pupils were enthralled while investigating the dissolving properties of different substances. Expectations were high, pupils were able to explain what they had observed and the teacher skilfully developed pupils' thinking further through probing questions. The quality of marking is good in most classes. In writing, particularly, teachers give constructive feedback to pupils on how they might improve further.

There is good provision for literacy, numeracy, and personal, social and health education. This contributes significantly to pupils' strong development in these aspects. There are high quality displays of pupils' work around the school. The good quality of pupils' art work is recognised by the award of Artsmark Gold. The school is introducing a more cross-curricular approach in order to make better links between subjects and to provide more opportunities for pupils to work creatively. In an outstanding lesson in Year 5 around the topic of myths and legends pupils worked very enthusiastically on tasks that included literacy, geography and history. In other classes, this new approach to the curriculum is less well embedded. This is also the case for ICT. Resources have been enhanced and there are examples of good practice. However, not all pupils are given sufficient opportunities to use ICT to support their learning and to develop their skills in other subjects.

The school works well with partners to provide effectively for vulnerable pupils and enables them to play their full part in the life of the school. Parents and carers comment very favourably on the caring support given by staff. There are examples of exemplary

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practice. The 'quiet place' is a haven for pupils with particular needs and gives excellent support to those pupils. There is a weekly audit of aspects such as attendance and changes in behaviour which means that any potential safeguarding issues are identified and, if necessary, tackled early.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher is prepared to take difficult decisions and has raised the expectations for the school. This vision has been transmitted to the staff and subject coordinators are playing a key role in driving up standards. Through a combination of support and challenge, the school is improving the quality of teaching and learning. Equally, heads of year are instrumental in maintaining good care for pupils. The staff are gelling as a team. For example, one factor in the improvements in mathematics is the good quality of joint planning that underpins the effective teaching. Each pupil is equally important. The school has successfully closed the gap for the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 in Year 6 national tests. Safeguarding issues are given a high priority in practice. The child protection policy is good and is used well; all staff have been trained in its use. However, the records to show staff participation in externally provided training are not complete. While engagement with parents and carers and local community links generally are outstanding, the school is still developing pupils' understanding of other cultures and making global links, for example, through the new cross-curricular approach.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. A few ask for better information on how well their children are doing. The school agrees and the number of parents' evenings is to be increased, and parents and carers will receive more information in future on their child's progress. The views of parents and carers are largely consistent with the findings of the inspection team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 143 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 451 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	86	60	47	33	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	106	74	33	23	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	72	50	65	45	6	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	49	67	47	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	82	57	55	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	75	52	59	41	7	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	71	50	67	47	4	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	64	45	71	50	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	48	69	48	2	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	42	71	50	7	5	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	63	44	69	48	7	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	77	54	61	43	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	89	62	51	36	2	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School, Liverpool, L14 0JG

Thank you very much for all your help when we inspected your school. You told us that St Margaret Mary's is a good school and we agree. You told us that you very much enjoy coming to school and feel very safe there. These are the things we particularly liked.

- You behave well and show respect for one another.
- The school takes good care of you.
- You have good teachers.
- The staff provide you with interesting things to do.
- The school is an integral part of the local community.
- The school is led well.

The school is improving things for you and is always looking to see how it can do even better. For example, it has introduced 'Big Write' to improve your writing and is looking at ways of making the lessons even more interesting. We have agreed with the school on three things to do that would lead to further improvement. First is to ensure that all teaching is at least good. Second is to ensure that you all get sufficient opportunities to use computers to help you to improve in all your work. Third, although the school takes very good care of you, some of the paperwork is not up to date. The school is going to make sure that it is.

Once again thank you. You are good ambassadors for your school. Please keep up the good work. Make sure you ask if you do not understand anything in your work because your teachers will be very pleased to help you.

Yours sincerely

Mr Barry Jones

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