

# St Mary's Catholic Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104816
<b>Local Authority</b>	St. Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	336369
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Diane Auton

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	234
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John O'Connell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Gerry Southworth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Barn Way Newton-le-Willows Merseyside WA12 9QQ
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<b>Email address</b>	stmaryrcnj@sthelens.org.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed eight teachers in their classrooms. They held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including data about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records. Inspectors reviewed information provided by parents in 96 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views pupils and staff expressed in their questionnaires.

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

- whether attainment gaps between gender groups and subjects seen in the last school year have begun to close
- the progress of the more-able pupils across the school and whether they are securely on track for higher attainment by the end of the key stage
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels, including governors and middle leaders, on the drive to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils.

## Information about the school

This average size school serves three parishes across a wide urban area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that found in most schools; the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the last inspection. The school has experienced a number of long-term absences of staff over recent times, some of which are still current.

Since its last inspection, the school has achieved the Eco Schools Green Flag Award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Activemark, the Healthy Schools Award, The ICT (information and communication technology) Mark and the International Schools Award (intermediate level).

**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

St Mary's is a good school, providing excellent pastoral care, good teaching and an outstanding curriculum that fully engages pupils in learning. The school has continued to improve since its last inspection, sustaining its good overall effectiveness, despite changes in leadership and some turbulence in staffing. Standards at the end of Year 6 have remained consistently and significantly above the national average.

This is a very inclusive school. Over several years, it has provided successfully for small numbers of pupils who have severe learning difficulties or acute physical or medical needs, enabling them to access education alongside their peers in a mainstream setting. Very careful consideration is given to pupils' welfare and this is greatly appreciated by parents and carers. Sensitive and effective support given to vulnerable pupils enables them to access the benefits of coming to school and to achieve and progress well.

The school has correctly identified mathematics as a priority area for improvement. It can now show evidence of improved progress and attainment in mathematics for pupils in the lower and middle ability bands, in all of the year groups, as a result of well-targeted additional support this year. Everyone understands there is more to do, however, to ensure that the more-able pupils achieve as well as they possibly can in mathematics. Some newer systems introduced to support the drive for high standards across subjects are not yet fully embedded. For example, there is an inconsistency in the quality and effectiveness of marking and in the use of individual learning targets.

The effective headteacher and dedicated governors have steered the school safely through a time of change. The school's strategic planning is of good quality and there is a strong team ethos, with all staff involved in on-going reflection and review. Self-evaluation is accurate, based on systematic monitoring and regular and rigorous analysis; its leaders know the school well. All of this, combined with the skills and talents of leaders and staff, means that the school has good capacity for continued improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve pupils' progress in mathematics by:
  - ensuring that the more-able pupils are identified, fully supported and appropriately challenged.
- Reinforce the drive to raise standards in all subjects by:
  - ensuring consistency in the quality of marking and in the use of individual learning targets, so that pupils always have a clear picture of what they need to

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do to improve their work and of what the next steps in their learning should be.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils concentrate well and make good progress in lessons, showing interest and enthusiasm. They use information and communication technology equipment with assurance. They work well with a partner or in groups, and this is helping them to develop and offer their ideas readily. Both their responses in lessons and the work in their books indicate good attainment and progress. Pupils' starting points on entry to Year 3 are generally a little above average, although they tend to be slightly lower in mathematics than in English. Attainment at the end of the key stage has been significantly above average in all subjects for the past two years. The school's tracking information shows that pupils in all year groups made good progress in reading and writing during the last school year and that this continues to be the picture in the current year. There is strong evidence of an improving trend in attainment in mathematics across the school, although the proportion of the more able pupils on track for higher attainment in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 is currently only broadly average.

Pupils show excellent awareness of issues around personal safety. They have a developing understanding of the factors that contribute to healthy living and they enjoy the good range of opportunities provided for them to be active and keep fit.

They enjoy taking responsibility, for example, as school councillors, eco officers, information and communication technology monitors and play leaders. They form good relationships with each other and with the adults in school, and they say they are confident that help is on hand if they encounter any problems. Their good basic skills and good study and concentration skills mean that they are well prepared for the future. They show a good understanding of the sound moral values the school promotes, reflected in their outstandingly good behaviour and considerate attitudes. They consider and discuss serious issues thoughtfully in assemblies and in lessons, and they are active fund-raisers for local, national and international charitable causes. The curriculum is helping them to develop an increased understanding of cultures and faiths beyond their own direct experience. Attendance is good and the school ensures that pupils at risk of poor attendance are identified and supported.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> 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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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Good teaching, with some outstanding practice, contributes well to pupils' learning and progress and to their personal development. Pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations of their effort and behaviour in lessons. Lessons are planned well to take the range of learners' needs into account. The pace of learning is brisk; the level of challenge is good and teachers use questioning well to extend pupils' thinking. Teachers give pupils a clear understanding of what they are expected to do and to achieve in lessons. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking and in the effective use of individual learning targets. This means that pupils are not always pointed to the next steps in their learning and that they are not always given clear advice about how to improve their work. Regular assessment ensures that teachers have a good overview of how well pupils are doing. Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to the learning and progress of those pupils who have additional needs.

The curriculum is planned extremely well to reflect pupils' interests and this ensures they are engaged fully. Very good opportunities are found for pupils to practise and develop their basic skills through work across the areas of learning, and this contributes well to raising attainment. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports, the performing arts, information and communication technology and a modern foreign language. Further enhancement is provided by visiting specialists, themed events and visits to places of interest. The school's partnership with a primary school in Kenya adds an international dimension. Well planned provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that they enjoy full access to learning and social inclusion. Pastoral care is excellent and the school works very

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sensitively to support vulnerable pupils and their families. This is helping to break down barriers to learning and progress that some pupils encounter. Regular progress reviews help to identify pupils who are underachieving, ensuring they are given the support they need. The school promotes good attendance effectively. After-school provision includes a wide range of well-attended clubs and activities.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Governors and staff at all levels wholeheartedly share the headteacher's clear vision and resolve to take the school forward and to achieve the best possible outcomes for its pupils. The supportive governing body is an effective, critical friend to the school. Senior staff and subject leaders play an active role in planning for improvement and in assuring the quality of provision and this contributes well to school improvement. Leaders know their school well. Rigorous monitoring systems help to assure the good quality of teaching and the excellent, lively curriculum. The information gained from monitoring and review is used well to help leaders set the ambitious improvement targets which are described in the school development plan. Parents' and carers' very positive views of the school reflect good home/school partnerships, supported by regular communications, including the school's website. The school complies well with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety, and child protection through well-managed procedures and through on-going review of their effectiveness. Its inclusive ethos promotes equality of opportunity and access to educational entitlement well. The school's extended provision in its after-school activities is well organised, popular with pupils and valued by parents and carers. The school contributes well to community cohesion through a wide range of partnerships in its community and the parishes, including its close links with the high school. The school also works effectively with a range of agencies that support pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

### **Views of parents and carers**

Approximately half of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. A very large majority of those who responded said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. This is in line with the inspection team's judgement on the school's good overall effectiveness.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St 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 96 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 234 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	73	25	26	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	76	79	16	17	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	54	56	37	39	5	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	58	34	35	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	59	61	34	35	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	47	44	46	5	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	60	36	38	0	0	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)	49	51	40	42	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	57	37	39	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	51	40	42	4	4	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	44	47	49	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	67	70	26	27	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	65	68	26	27	1	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



27 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Junior School, Newton-le-Willows, WA12 9QQ

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school.

As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. St Mary's is a good school. It has some outstanding features.

These are some of the things we found out about your school

It is a happy place for learning and you are extremely well behaved and polite young people. You work hard in your lessons, you enjoy your work and you get on well with each other and with the adults in school. You are given good teaching and very interesting lessons. The grown-ups in school look after you extremely well. You are making good progress in your learning. We were delighted to hear how much you enjoy the after-school clubs.

There is still some work to be done to make St Mary's the best school it can possibly be. This is what I have asked the headteacher and the staff to do.

- Find ways to ensure that the most able pupils do as well as they possibly can in mathematics.
- Make sure that the marking in your books always helps you to know how to improve your work and that your targets help you understand what the next steps in your learning should be.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Diane Auton

Lead inspector

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