

St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111357
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	337668
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev P Phillips
Headteacher	Mr Robert Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons involving seven teachers and spent over 50% of the time observing learning. They looked at the school's work, analysing a range of documentation, including improvement plans, reports from the School Improvement Partner and the school's tracking records. Discussions were held with staff, pupils, parents and carers and the Chair of Governors. In addition, 81 parents' and carers' questionnaires were analysed, including three that were returned too late to be included in the table contained in this report. Inspectors also analysed questionnaires completed by pupils and by staff.

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

- the academic progress made by pupils in Year 3 who are entitled to free school meals and also the progress made by pupils in Year 5
- the progress made by children during their time in the Reception class
- whether pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding as the school judges.

Information about the school

Pupils in this average-sized school come from a wide range of backgrounds but with very few whose heritage is not White British. The proportion entitled to free school meals is well below average, as is the percentage with a statement of special educational needs. In contrast, the overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one Reception class. Housed within the school is a privately run pre-school setting and the adults who run and staff this provision also offer a breakfast and an after-school club for St Mary's pupils. These provisions are subject to a separate inspection and report. The school has Healthy Schools status, is in receipt of the Activemark, has an award for its care of the environment and has achieved the Financial Management Systems in School award. Since the last inspection, a new school has been built on the existing site.

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 school gives its pupils a good all-round education. Within the overall good quality of leadership and management, leaders and managers are conspicuously successful at providing outstanding care and support for pupils, which leads to many excellent outcomes in relation to pupils' personal skills and developing citizenship. The extremely positive way in which the school involves parents and carers in all aspects of its work contributes significantly to pupils' evident enjoyment and good achievements. A comment which typifies parents' and carers' views of the school is: 'The school provides a warm, safe and happy environment for my children. They enjoy school and have come on extremely well at St Mary's.'

Pupils are taught well and, as a result, make good academic progress throughout the school to attain above average standards by the time they leave Year 6 with a significant number attaining highly. One or two aspects of teaching and learning are not as strong as most and this limits its quality to good rather than outstanding.

Strengthening these aspects is key to raising pupils' standards and their achievement even further. Pupils enjoy an enriched curriculum which promotes their basic skills well and their personal development outstandingly well. Excellent partnerships with external providers significantly enhance pupils' learning, for example, in sport, art, science and in their understanding of business. Similarly, effective links with external agencies contribute extremely well to the very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and to the outstanding safeguarding of pupils.

Leaders and managers, including governors, evaluate the school's work rigorously. This enables them to identify strengths and weaknesses accurately and to plan appropriately for improvements. Since the last inspection, accommodation and resources have been transformed in their quality, providing pupils with a splendid environment in which to work and the tools with which to achieve well. Very firm administration, a stable staff and an evident shared ambition indicate good capacity for the school to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To ensure that pupils' standards are high and that their achievement is excellent, raise the quality of teaching and learning and of assessment from good to outstanding, by:
 - making sure that in all classes there is an appropriate balance between the amount of teachers' input and talk and opportunity for pupils actively to practise skills and apply their learning

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- ensuring that pupils are challenged appropriately during the whole lesson, not just in those parts of the lesson when they work independently at different tasks
- marking work in all subjects as assiduously and helpfully as that evident in English
- involving pupils much more in assessing their own work and progress, particularly in identifying where they have responded to advice provided by teachers' marking and in judging when they have met their targets.

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

Lessons are typified by attentive pupils who enjoy learning, are keen to do well and who work with sustained concentration. Relationships between pupils are very positive. Pupils clearly get on well with their teachers, who promote a very positive atmosphere in classrooms, as a result of the praise and encouragement they consistently provide. Pupils' exemplary behaviour is a very significant factor in the effective quality of their learning and in their good academic progress. Pupils are familiar with their targets, although not always clear on how to assess when they have achieved them. They take a pride in presenting their work well and they use information and communication technology effectively to support their work, for example in designing presentations or manipulating the interactive whiteboard. Standards in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science and a significant proportion attain highly for their age. All pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well overall. Some concerns raised prior to the inspection about the possible lack of progress of pupils in Year 3 who are entitled to free school meals, and that of Year 5 pupils, proved unfounded in the light of the evidence from observations, discussions and convincing school data. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively to participate fully in lessons to progress well academically and personally. Those few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are popular and successful.

Pupils' personal outcomes are one of the major strengths of the school. The extent to which pupils develop relevant workplace skills is good, particularly as regards their above average attendance and good punctuality. Older pupils assume many responsibilities, especially those which require them to nurture and provide positive role models for younger pupils. The responses pupils made to the inspection questionnaire were clear that they all feel very safe and extremely well looked after. Pupils have a deep sense of spirituality, are morally mature and extremely adept socially. This gives them a sense of well-being and a growing confidence to take on life's challenges.

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching ranges in quality from satisfactory to outstanding but it is predominantly good. In all lessons the quality of relationships is strong and learning is enhanced by the effective use of computers and visual stimuli. Teachers plan assiduously, using assessment information carefully to plan challenging work for pupils of all abilities in those parts of the lesson when pupils work independently or in groups. During the other parts of lessons such challenge is not always evident. Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively to make new learning clear and to explain concepts in different ways to help those pupils who may have some difficulty in grasping things quickly. Pupils are helped to improve their work in English by some high-quality marking. However, in other subjects marking tends to be more cursory and contains fewer pointers about how pupils can improve their work in that particular subject. A considerable strength in teaching is the excellent promotion and consistent reinforcement of pupils' personal development. The results of this are evident in pupils' very positive attitudes, in their willingness to follow instructions, in their support for one another and in their confident demeanour.

Pupils very much enjoy their experiences in school. They eagerly participate in a range of after-school clubs which promote their good health, their creative development and which provide the foundation of possible life-long interest and learning. The curriculum effectively meets all pupils' needs whatever their interests and abilities. More-able pupils attain highly in national tests because they are appropriately challenged and involved. The school identifies and makes good provision for those pupils who have a particular gift or talent. Pupils who need extra help with their work or to cope emotionally with life

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have a well-balanced curriculum which meets their needs well. The wide range of stimulating visits out of school and of the visitors who come into school add considerable value to pupils' learning and personal development. The high-quality care and support provided plays a highly significant role in pupils' good achievements and in how secure they feel. Pupils' evident sense of well-being reflects the school's success in providing equality of opportunity and its inclusive nature. Systems to ensure that pupils attend regularly, behave well, feel extremely safe and to support more vulnerable pupils, are all at least very effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is led effectively by an able and well-respected headteacher. The headteacher is well supported by the senior management team, including a highly effective bursar who makes a telling contribution to prudent financial management and to the very smooth day-to-day running of the school. The whole staff shares the ambition to seek constant, further improvement. To this end, all staff are included in self-evaluations, performance management and improvement planning. This means that strengths identified can be appropriately disseminated and weaknesses tackled. For example, the relative underperformance of some Year 3 and Year 5 pupils has been tackled successfully as a result of prompt intervention and support. Governors effectively play their part in promoting improvement and in challenging performance. Members of the governing body possess the relevant expertise to support the school's work and to evaluate its effectiveness. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met to the highest standard and that pupils' safety has the most significant profile possible in all of the school's work. Parents and carers value highly the excellent way in which the school engages them in their children's learning and keeps them informed about what is happening in the school. The recently introduced text messaging system has proved invaluable, especially in the case of school clubs or other events being cancelled at short notice.

Pupils speak warmly of the inclusive nature of the school and in discussions with them it is clear that they are strong advocates of equality and active opponents of discrimination and harassment. They are also strong ambassadors for sustainability and reach out willingly and proactively to the local community to emphasise their commitment to this. This exemplifies the school's successful promotion of community cohesion. Equally

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effective in promoting children's appreciation of different cultures is the link established between children in Reception and those in a nursery school in Lancashire, which has a majority of children who worship within the Islamic faith.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Reception with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They are taught well in a setting which provides them with good opportunities to learn through instruction and play. The curriculum provides an apt balance between adult-led and child-initiated activity, indoors and out. As a result, children make at least good progress in all areas of their learning. They make exceptional progress in their personal, social and emotional development, which provides a very secure foundation for the love of learning and the excellent personal skills evident in older pupils. Given the relatively weaker language and communication skills with which children enter Reception, it is testament to the effective teaching of letter sounds that they progress well in these and enter Year 1 with above average attainment in communication, language and literacy and all other areas of their learning.

Parents and carers are extensively involved in their children's learning and development, including regularly accessing assessments of their children's progress. Assessment is thorough and effectively informs planning. Leadership is good, with thorough reviews of provision, careful tracking of children's development, constant updating of practice and increasingly effective links with a variety of pre-school providers. Leadership ensures that the same high standards of safeguarding, welfare and care are maintained in the Early Years Foundation Stage as in the school as a whole.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over 40% of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work and extremely complimentary about leadership by the headteacher. Responses from the questionnaires and discussions indicate that they feel the outstanding aspects of the school are in ensuring their children's enjoyment, in keeping them safe and in enabling them to progress well. Very few felt that they received too little information about their children's progress. Inspectors found that the school provides good-quality information and as frequently as most other schools. A very small minority felt that their suggestions and concerns were too little heeded. Evidence indicates that parents' and carers' individual and collective concerns are responded to in writing and that 96% of parents and carers felt positively about this issue. Inspectors concur with the positive responses of parents and carers about many aspects of the school's work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary 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 81 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 205 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	72	22	27	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	68	84	13	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	54	33	41	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	58	33	41	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	58	72	21	26	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	60	30	37	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	63	27	33	2	2	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)	37	46	41	51	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	53	36	44	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	54	34	42	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	48	39	48	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	63	78	16	20	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	78	15	19	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 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.



05 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School, Ellesmere Port, CH66 1NN

Thank you very much for the most polite and warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we inspected your school recently. I am writing to let you know what we found out and in what ways we think that the school could be even better.

Yours is a good school and some things are excellent. These are:

- how well you are looked after and are given help when you need it, which makes you feel very safe
- your super behaviour and attitudes to learning
- the way in which the school helps and encourages your parents and carers to be partners in your learning and to be involved in school life
- your keenness to look after the environment and to save energy
- the links the school makes with companies, other schools and with the emergency services and the school nurse to widen your knowledge.

Now for the things I have agreed with your headteacher and governors that could help you to do even better. I want you to achieve even higher standards and for your teaching to be excellent, so I have asked your teachers to do these things.

- Make sure that in lessons you always have enough time to work on your own or in groups.
- Challenge you at the level that just suits you, all the way through lessons not just in parts of them.
- Mark your work as helpfully in other subjects as in English and help you to decide for yourselves when you have met your targets.

You can all help by always trying your very best and telling your teachers if something is too easy or too hard for you.

Yours sincerely

Mr Paul Bamber

Lead inspector

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