

Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School, Loughborough

Hastings Street, Loughborough, LE11 5AX

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress and reach above-average standards in English and mathematics by the time they leave.
- They apply their literacy and numeracy skills well across all subjects.
- Teaching is most often good, and outstanding in some classes.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and give pupils many opportunities to work together and share ideas.
- Children in Reception learn well. Their lessons are exciting and capture their imagination.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Their behaviour is exemplary.
- Pupils show great respect for all members of the school community. They say that they feel safe and are very well cared for.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, check the school's effectiveness and plan carefully to ensure that teaching and pupils' achievement continue to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' lesson plans do not always focus sharply enough on what pupils are to learn.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to plan work and think for themselves.
- Guided reading time is not organised well enough to ensure that all pupils make the most of these sessions.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes and observed teaching in 16 lessons. They were accompanied by the headteacher during five of these lessons. In addition, inspectors observed pupils' social skills during morning break and at lunchtime.
- They looked at the work in pupils' books, listened to a sample of pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6, and held discussions with pupils about many aspects of school life.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior members of staff and two members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, who is also a member of the executive of the multi-academy trust.
- They considered the views expressed by 17 members of staff who completed questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's strategic plan, safeguarding checks, and data about pupils' current progress.
- They took account of the 24 responses to the online Parent View survey during the inspection, and held a number of informal conversations with parents.

Inspection team

Mike Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Tabberer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This small primary school converted to academy status in July 2012, and retained the name of its predecessor school. It is a member of the Blessed Cyprian Tansi Multi-Academy Trust, which comprises of six Catholic schools within the local area.
- The academy predecessor school was last inspected in December 2009 and judged to be a satisfactory school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is higher than the national average. Only a few pupils need help in learning to communicate in English. In most instances, these are pupils who are newly arrived from Poland.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average. Just under half of these pupils are supported through school action, while the remainder are supported at the school action plus level. There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that in all lessons:
 - plans focus sharply on what pupils should be learning, rather than just the activities to be completed
 - teachers routinely use strategies to make sure that pupils think more for themselves and develop skills in planning how they are to tackle and set out their work.
- Review the way in which guided reading sessions are organised by ensuring that all groups of pupils have clear targets to achieve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children's levels of skills on entry are close to those expected nationally for four-year-olds. They learn well because the Early Years Foundation Stage staff continuously assess their achievement and use this information to plan exciting activities, well matched to their learning needs.
- Standards and progress are improving. In all year groups the attainment of pupils is above national expectations. Most pupils learn successfully in all subjects because of their good basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Pupils are articulate. In most instances, they have secure knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and use this learning well to help them read unfamiliar words. They become adept at identifying patterns in numbers.
- Within this positive picture, some of the least able pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a fragile grasp of letter sounds because they do not read regularly enough. During guided reading sessions, pupils who are expected to read by themselves sometimes lose focus.
- Throughout the school, the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is closely checked. Teachers use the information gathered to adjust their planning and to carefully tailor the additional help provided by other adults. These pupils make good progress.
- The school makes effective use of extra funding such as the pupil premium to ensure that the pupils concerned have the same access to learning as their classmates, and generally achieve well. This reflects good promotion of equal opportunities and the tackling of discrimination.

The quality of teaching is good

- Parents feel that their children are taught well. Most parents appreciate the homework set for their children. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons because their work is interesting.
- Teachers create a positive climate for learning and promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. As a result, relationships are strong and pupils work well with one another.
- In all lessons, teachers explain tasks clearly and provide good opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their skills. They are skilled at using questions to check on pupils' understanding and rapidly adjust their teaching if necessary.
- Teachers' use of assessment to inform their lesson planning has become much sharper. They are generally skilled in pitching work at different levels so that all groups of pupils are suitably challenged. However, lesson planning tends to focus more on the activities to be taught rather than the intended learning. The most effective teachers instinctively make adjustments so that the quality of pupils' learning becomes their main focus, but this is not always the case.
- Sometimes, lessons do not allow pupils to make decisions about their learning or use their initiative.
- The assistants who support teachers are highly skilled in explaining and modelling what needs to

be done for individuals or small groups who need extra help. Two of the assistants speak Polish and provide useful support for pupils who are newly arrived from Poland.

- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is a useful tool for improvement. Good dialogue between teachers and pupils is evident in many of the pupils' books.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is crisply paced and this results in good learning. However, in guided reading sessions, teachers do not always ensure that pupils who are reading independently have clear targets to help drive their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils display consistently positive attitudes during lessons. They listen well and are always keen to respond to teachers' questions. They are invariably engrossed in their work.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils clearly know right from wrong and have a very strong sense of fair play. They consistently show courtesy and good manners towards each other and adults, and are intensely proud of their school.
- Parents appreciate the way in which the school promotes high standards of behaviour. There have been no exclusions. Pupils say that instances of bullying of any kind are extremely rare, but the school is quick to act in such circumstances.
- The school ensures that pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep safe. They are well informed about the importance of using the internet safely.
- Pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility and make decisions through, for example, the eco-school work and the school council.
- Pupils attend regularly and are punctual. There are some absences due to holidays taken in term-time by a few children from minority ethnic groups maintaining contact with families overseas.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governing body are determined to improve the school. They have agreed clear and detailed strategic plans. Progress in meeting the targets set out in these plans is constantly reviewed.
- Inspection questionnaires returned by members of staff show that the leadership of the school has their full support. All members of staff provide good role models in consistently promoting the strong values and beliefs that permeate all aspects of school life.
- The school's vision is regularly shared with parents, for example through informative newsletters. The responses received from parents show clearly that the school has their confidence and that they fully subscribe to the direction given by the headteacher and governing body.
- In addition to the overwhelmingly positive responses to the online survey of parents' views, some parents wrote to the inspectors. Typical of the many appreciative comments made are: 'we cannot thank the school enough for the care given to our children' and 'St Mary's provides a

high-quality learning environment’.

- Well-established systems for monitoring ensure that leaders have an accurate view of the impact of teaching on pupils’ achievement. Systems for setting targets for teachers continue to be effective in driving improvement.
- There are good opportunities for staff to improve their skills. These include continued links with the local authority Loughborough Development Group of schools.
- The topics planned for pupils provide good opportunities for them to improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. They also provide exciting first-hand learning experiences incorporating many subjects. For example, pupils in Year 3 visited Market Harborough Museum as part of their study of the Romans.
- Regular teaching and reinforcement of important values permeate all aspects of school life. For example, a small group of students from a local independent convent school visited during the inspection. All pupils watched their presentation at a whole-school assembly with rapt attention as the students acted out a play promoting the importance of tolerance and understanding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is generally well informed
 - contributes well to the strategic direction of the school and is closely involved in the work of the multi-academy trust
 - ensures that the budget is effectively managed
 - ensures that safeguarding fully meets statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138295
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	408618

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Ford
Headteacher	Annette Jones
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01509 212621
Fax number	01509 239291
Email address	office@stmarys-rc.leics.sch.uk

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