

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Manor Lane, Middlewich, Cheshire, CW10 9DH

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 in English and mathematics. This reflects recent improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good across all year groups and subjects.
- Over time, pupils supported by the pupil premium make progress that compares well with similar pupils in other schools.
- Behaviour in the school is outstanding. Pupils have strong attitudes to learning in class and their behaviour around the school is exemplary.
- School leaders, including governors, have put in place effective systems to check and improve the quality of teaching and raise standards. As a result, pupils are making faster progress and standards are rising.
- The headteacher has created a strong, team approach to improving the school rapidly.
- Leaders and governors have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to make further improvements.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While most teaching is good, there is not enough which is outstanding.
- Questioning is not always used effectively to check pupils' progress and extend their understanding during lessons.
- Pupils are not always given opportunities to respond to teachers' marking.
- The skills of subject leaders in the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning are not yet fully developed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 parts of lessons taught by 12 teachers.
- Inspectors carried out shorter visits to lessons to assess pupils' work and progress and also visited an assembly and guided reading sessions.
- Meetings were held with pupils, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and members of the governing body. Discussions also took place with a representative of the local authority and the school's external support provider.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation for gaining an accurate view of its own performance. They scrutinised improvement plans, as well as a range of policies and assessment information. They also looked at pupils' work in books during lessons.
- The views of 41 parents were considered through the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The views of 17 members of staff, expressed through a staff questionnaire, were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Gary Kelly, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frances Farnorth

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average; the proportion who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and children from service families) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported by school action is above average; the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- Over the past two years there have been significant changes to the school's leadership. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2012, having been appointed as acting headteacher in 2011, one week before the last inspection. This was also the case for both assistant headteachers who were appointed to permanent posts in September 2012.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching, to further raise achievement, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers develop strong questioning skills that enable them to check on pupils' progress during lessons so that pupils can fully extend their knowledge and understanding
 - pupils read and respond to the high-quality written feedback they receive in their workbooks, so it is clear that they understand how to improve.
- Further improve the skills of subject leaders so they can take a lead role in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Because of the rigorous approach taken by senior leaders, governors, teachers and support staff, since the last inspection, to improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress, achievement has improved in the school and is now good.
- Most children start the Early Years Foundation Stage displaying knowledge and skills which are broadly typical for their age. Due to improved teaching, children are now encouraged to develop their independent learning skills and make good progress, ensuring that they are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- In Year 6 in 2013, there was a considerable improvement, compared to 2011 and 2012, in test results in English and mathematics to above national averages. The school's data and inspection evidence confirm that this trend in improvement is set to continue.
- The proportions of pupils making or exceeding their expected levels of progress compare favourably against national expectations. This is because of the school's improved systems to track underachievement and its concerted effort to improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils are confident in speaking and listening because they participate in discussions to solve problems, and voice opinions about their learning. High-quality activities for younger pupils develop their knowledge of letters and sounds that they confidently build into words and sentences.
- Pupils make good progress in their reading. In 2012 and 2013, Year 1 pupils achieved above national expectations in a check of their understanding of the sounds that letters make.
- Pupils' achievement in English and mathematics has improved because the school has instilled a strong focus on improving their reading, writing, communication and mathematics skills in all lessons.
- The small number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve as well as similar pupils in other schools. This is because they are taught well, and are well supported by skilled teachers and support staff in classrooms and in small groups.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, now make good progress. In 2013, these pupils were less than one term behind other pupils of the same age in the school in both English and mathematics. This demonstrates the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities for all and tackling discrimination.
- The school's improved support and intervention to meet the needs of the growing numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language ensure that they, too, make good progress in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is mostly good, with some teaching which is outstanding.
- The strongest teaching is characterised by teachers and teaching assistants who have strong subject knowledge, use careful on-going assessment, accurate analysis of pupils' needs and thorough planning. In these lessons, pupils make rapid progress in their learning and develop a range of skills.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good, both in class and as part of the wider curriculum. Disabled pupils, those pupils who have special educational needs, and pupils supported by the pupil premium are supported well in their development of literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, they make good progress.
- The growing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress from their below-average starting points because the thorough and high-quality intervention activities they receive quickly help to develop their language and communication skills.
- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers' meticulous planning ensures that each pupil is planned

for, and the teacher has the same high expectations for all abilities in the class. This was evident in a Year 2 and 3 literacy lesson where there was very good support provided by the teaching assistant, who carefully encouraged the pupils being supported to make outstanding progress in their learning and understanding.

- The best lessons are typified by well-defined tasks and prompt support so that pupils make rapid progress in understanding new learning.
- The teaching of reading and writing is systematic, with well-structured and effective teaching of sounds and letters development. The school's teaching of mathematics and communication skills also continues to improve. As a result, pupils are now able to make good progress across all year groups and subjects.
- In a few lessons, teachers' questioning skills do not allow them to assess the progress being made and adjust activities and the pace of learning to suit.
- Where marking is most effective, it provides pupils with clear guidance on what to do next to improve and they are expected to respond to the feedback. However, the expectation that pupils respond to this feedback is not yet fully consistent across all classes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' exemplary behaviour means that disruption to lessons is very rare. Pupils have become used to managing their own behaviour, and supporting each other in learning.
- Leaders, staff, pupils and parents have ensured there is an overwhelmingly positive ethos in the school, which permeates all aspects of school life.
- Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and that they feel safe. They enjoy their learning and find lessons interesting. As a result, and in response to the school's hard work in this area, attendance is above average.
- Pupils are very aware of different forms of bullying and how to prevent and report it. Older pupils take it upon themselves to keep a watchful eye over their younger peers and, as a result, there are almost no instances of bullying in the school. Parents largely agree that poor behaviour and bullying are very rare.
- Pupils make the most of opportunities to voice their views. The active school council harvests the views of almost all pupils in making decisions to improve the school. There are good relationships between pupils and adults. As a result, pupils are confident in sharing their ideas and expressing their views.
- Pupils of all ages play very well together. The well-planned outdoor environment includes a nature area and 'Chicken Club' which all pupils enjoy. The school has ensured that pupils have a good awareness of risk and are able to look after themselves and each other. For example, pupils have a good understanding of the risks associated with the internet and social media.
- Any incidents concerning behaviour, including rare incidents of bullying or racist behaviour, or any involving accidental injury are investigated effectively. The school has improved the way it communicates with parents since the last inspection.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has been determined and effective in her approach to improving the quality of teaching and raising standards and achievement in the school since her appointment.
- The strong team ethic has been embraced by leaders, including governors, teachers, teaching assistants and all other staff who are all fully committed to the school's continued improvement.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. The bespoke systems, developed by the school for collecting and analysing accurate information about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning, have ensured that where there is underachievement, it is quickly identified and addressed.
- As a result, leaders have clear plans for the priorities which will have the greatest influence in

improving pupils' learning. The aim to continually improve the quality of teaching has been embraced by all staff. They are all provided with good opportunities for their professional development and this training is well matched to the school's priorities.

- Teachers' progression along the pay scale is now more sharply aligned to their individual performance and the progress pupils make.
- The school has implemented a rigorous approach to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects of the curriculum. Leaders of key subjects including English and mathematics are successful in continuing to raise standards in their areas.
- The school's outstanding curriculum ensures that all pupils make at least good progress. There is a wide range of creative and imaginative topics and subjects on offer. Leaders are using the new primary sports funding effectively to employ specialists in physical education to work with pupils and provide training opportunities which further develop teachers' skills. Pupils say that they enjoy the many different sporting opportunities, which all engage with and which develop their physical well-being highly successfully.
- In addition, assemblies, well-attended after-school clubs and the school's commitment to become an 'Eco School' are carefully planned so that pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is at the forefront of the school's work.
- The School Improvement Partner and the local authority have supported the school's improvement effectively, particularly the improvement in the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a broad range of expertise and skills to support their work in ensuring that the school improves further and in holding it to account for its performance. Governors recognise their changing role and are keen to continually develop. They set challenging targets for the headteacher and each other and are well informed about the school's performance. Governors also have a thorough understanding about the school's use of the pupil premium and are at the forefront of developments to ensure staff progression along the pay scale is more closely linked to the achievement that their pupils make. Governors ensure the school's financial health and take a lead in all matters relating to safeguarding, ensuring the school meets its statutory duties.

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	111340
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	426124

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	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roy Davies
Headteacher	Susan Noyce
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2011
Telephone number	01606 832164
Fax number	Not Applicable
Email address	head@stmarysmiddlewich.cheshire.sch.uk

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