

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School

Howson Road, Brockley, London, SE4 2BB

Inspection dates

25–26 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress from their entry to the Reception class. By the end of Year 6, they reach standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching over time is good and pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations of them. Teachers' good quality written and spoken advice on how to improve further is regularly followed by pupils.
- Pupils from different groups, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who receive the pupil premium funding, make good progress because adults understand their individual needs and provide effective support for them.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. The pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. They are polite, well mannered and often help others. Pupils feel safe and many set a good example for their peers.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, which they say is 'a happy place'. The range of interesting topics and themes is complemented by the strong Catholic ethos and this contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The good leadership of the headteacher and deputy has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Appointments of key staff and regular checks on learning have strengthened the leadership team and driven up standards across the school. Staff support for school leaders is positive and praiseworthy.
- Governors are passionate about, and committed to, the school's success. They visit school regularly and provide good levels of support and challenge, ensuring that the school continues to improve rapidly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers and support staff in lessons do not always question pupils effectively to develop their knowledge and understanding.
- In some lessons, support staff spend too much of their time helping one or two pupils instead of supporting others.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons, one jointly with the headteacher. They also observed support sessions for pupils at risk of falling behind.
- Inspectors attended one school assembly and visited a workshop on phonics (the sounds that letters represent) for parents.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in class, and spoke to two groups of pupils and several others informally throughout the inspection. They spoke with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, a representative from the local authority and school staff, including senior and subject leaders.
- Inspectors noted the views of 27 parents and carers who responded to the online Parent View survey and spoke to parents and carers who were bringing their children to school. A telephone call from a parent was also taken into consideration.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s information on pupils’ current progress, planning documents, checks carried out by leaders on the school’s effectiveness, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Aune Turkson-Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Clifford Walker

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary Magdalen's is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher, deputy and all of the teachers have joined the school within the last two years. There have also been new appointments to the governing body, including that of a new chairman.
- The majority of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with more than a third being of Black African heritage. The proportion who speaks English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided for looked after children, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed forces, is slightly below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, so that pupils make more rapid progress, by:
 - developing and deepening adults' use of questioning, so that pupils become more skilled at thinking things through and improving their own knowledge and understanding
 - extending the use of support staff in lessons so they offer help to a wider range of pupils who need it.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the Reception classes with skills and abilities that are generally below the levels expected for their age. They have a good start and quickly grow in confidence, becoming keen learners.
- Pupils' progress is good and, by the end of Year 6, the pupils are reaching standards that are above average. School information and pupils' current work indicate that pupils, including the most able, are on track to continue to improve further in 2014. An increased number is set to achieve the highest level (Level 6), particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve well and gaps in attainment between these pupils and their classmates have closed. They are ahead in reading by almost half a term, a term ahead in mathematics and working at a similar level to their classmates in writing. Gaps are closing because the extra funding is used effectively to provide extra resources and staff to support them. It is also used to allow eligible pupils to access clubs and a range of trips.
- Year 1 pupils exceed national results in the annual screening check in phonics and those in Year 2 repeating the check have been equally successful.
- Pupils' standards in reading have risen consistently over recent years and remain above average. All pupils have positive attitudes and high levels of enthusiasm about their enjoyment of reading and the varied range of books available to choose from around the school.
- Writing standards have remained high since the previous inspection and writing is closely linked to themes, class visits and visitors. Pupils write for a range of purposes, with high levels of competence and confidence. They review and edit their own work so that they know how to improve and present their work with consistent neatness.
- In mathematics, teachers use varied and colourful resources to help pupils learn. They encourage them to explain and talk about their understanding of mathematics principles, so that they can then confidently apply their skills to problem solving. Daily mental mathematics sessions have a positive impact on raising achievement across the school.
- Additional sports funding is used well and teachers are working with specialists, such as a dance expert, to enhance their own skills and confidence, ready to lead their own classes in the summer term. Sport has a high profile in school and higher numbers of pupils are joining teams and competing with other schools.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive good support and achieve well as a result. Additional funding to provide specialised adult support for smaller groups has been effective in promoting these pupils' success.
- The achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to that of other pupils. Those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress because the school identifies their language needs early on and provides good support.
- Although pupils' progress is good overall, and improving for most groups, pupils are not always challenged and stretched to develop their knowledge and thinking and so do not yet achieve their full potential.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together in lessons to make sure that activities are interesting, motivating and suitably demanding for most pupils. However, teaching assistants' impact on learning is sometimes limited because too much time is spent with one or two pupils when more could benefit from their help.
- All disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive good-quality support at the right level for them, within lessons and in one-to-one or small-group activities. Pupils appreciate this, and in the relaxed and friendly environment are encouraged to do their best.

- The best teaching plays to pupils' skills as exceptionally keen learners who willingly rise to the challenges set for them. Pupils regularly use prompts and resources in the classroom and the information and communication technology suite is an excellent and valued resource, used to extend and deepen learning across a range of subjects. Year 5 pupils studying Picasso moved between their classroom and the suite to source their own information, and to view more of his portraits, prior to a visit to the National Portrait Gallery.
- Pupils learn exceptionally well in some lessons because they know what is expected of them. They are confident and typically use the different class resources to help themselves. Pupils learn particularly well when teachers and supporting adults ask searching questions which encourage them to think for themselves at a much deeper level, extending their knowledge and understanding. This is not yet the case in all lessons and pupils make less progress when questioning is not used so skilfully.
- Teachers are effective in linking activities with pupils' targets so that the pupils understand exactly how they can achieve greater success. This good practice is consistently widespread across the school.
- Marking is good in most lessons and subjects. Pupils regularly respond to teachers' spoken guidance and written 'green pen questions', showing their engagement with their learning and active participation in helping themselves to improve. Teachers' marking offers a careful balance between praise and suggestions about how to improve
- Homework set has a clear purpose. Pupils understand that it is a regular feature and extension of their work in class or links with what they will be learning next.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good. Pupils have developed positive attitudes to learning and the majority act responsibly in managing their own and helping with others' behaviour in the school. Play leaders and monitors carry out daily duties and school councillors have involved themselves in establishing the behaviour policy. This contributes to the temperate, friendly atmosphere of the school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe in school and on the roads outside, taking up leadership roles such as Junior Travel Ambassadors, and link with a local charity to help children feel safe. Pupils are insightful about e-safety and the perils of misusing the internet, and mobile phones are not permitted within school.
- The parents, carers, and staff agree that pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is a positive feature and pupils' attendance levels have remained high.
- The head boy and girl, supported by their deputies, are highly visible around the school and have a strong presence as very positive role models for others in the school.
- Pupils in the school have established links with a number of charities, locally and through the church, and regularly hear about different parts of the world in need through visitors and assemblies. This has prompted them to raise funds for the Philippines disaster, Help for Heroes and, more recently, Hearing dogs for the Deaf. Their empathy for the needs of others is evident and the school's promotion of Christian values encourages this.
- Bullying is rare and pupils comment that staff deal with it effectively when it occurs. Pupils understand that if they cannot resolve conflicts themselves, they can rely on staff to intervene quickly. There are very few racist incidents and discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. The grounds are impressively litter free and the limited playground areas are enhanced by a variety of outdoor games and equipment, which volunteers take out and put away at the end of play and lunchtimes.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good. Under the guidance of the new and highly experienced headteacher and deputy, the school quickly established and implemented a detailed plan to raise achievement while skilfully managing significant staff changes.
- School leaders have been successful in appointing a whole new team of teaching staff, without disturbing the learning and achievement of the pupils. The leadership team works together with a clear vision and commitment to continuous improvement. Its high expectations are reflected throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching and its impact on achievement have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Teaching and learning are managed well across the school.
- Leadership roles are evolving and strengthening at all levels, with the newest members of the leadership team receiving support from their colleagues. Staff support for school leaders is strong and many staff, during the inspection, expressed their praise for the headteacher and deputy.
- The school reviews all aspects of its work thoroughly and acts very quickly to address any gaps, so that the pace of improvement remains. The school's plan to raise achievement is realistic and sharply focused and is linked to close checks on the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress.
- Staff training, together with the very effective and active partnerships with the local authority and the diocesan board, has led to marked improvements across the school since the previous inspection. Staff are now more skilful in using assessment and progress information, and early gaps in learning are dealt with swiftly.
- Leaders make sure that teachers' pay and performance link directly to whole-school priorities and pupils' progress. Every member of the leadership team is active in checking the quality of teaching across the school, and class teachers have been paired up to plan and prepare together. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching so that the majority is now consistently good or better.
- Activities in lessons are supplemented by a vast number of extra-curricular clubs and activities, enhanced by the sports, dance and music specialists who work with the school. The promotion of health through sport is gaining a higher profile in school and more pupils than previously are attending sports clubs and representing the school.
- Equal opportunities are rigorously promoted and no pupil is denied access to anything the school has to offer. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, and a strong pastoral programme ensures the all-round development of each pupil.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly committed to continuing to improve the school and new members have been recruited to enhance the range of governors' skills. The governors work closely with school leaders, the local authority and church diocese to ensure that raising the quality of teaching and learning remains at the heart of their work. They have a good understanding of information on pupils' progress, and refresh their knowledge through update training. Governors use the most recent data to make comparisons with other schools, locally and nationally, and actively challenge school leaders where dips occur. They make regular visits to check directly on key areas of the school's work and meet up with their link member of staff. Governors ensure that financial resources are efficiently managed, including how pupil premium and sports funding have an impact on achievement. They check on the increased numbers participating in sports, clubs and teams and make sure that every Year 6 pupil is enabled to attend the five-day residential visit. Governors see that targets to improve the performance of staff are reviewed carefully and that teachers' pay is linked to how well pupils are doing. They are highly motivated and visible in the school and check that safeguarding 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	100720
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	432105

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	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Danny McGrath
Headteacher	Graeme McGlasson-West
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2012
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