

St Mary Magdalen Catholic Junior School

Linacre Road, Willesden Green, London, NW2 5BB

Inspection dates 3–4 July 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 in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. As a result, standards are above average and are rising.
- Leaders have put in place effective systems to check the progress of the different groups of pupils. They identify those who are at risk of falling behind in their learning and provide timely support.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Senior leaders have provided effective support and training for their staff to bring about improvements.
- Reading has improved and pupils show enjoyment in their reading of books.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are safe at school.
- The school is good at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The staff share the headteacher's relentless ambition to improve the school. The headteacher is well supported by the strong team of leaders, and by governors. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress have improved since the previous inspection.
- Governors know the school well and provide effective support and challenge to bring about improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always provide enough challenge for the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently give pupils time to respond to comments in their marking, to enable them to improve their work further.
- Pupils do not always have enough opportunities to apply their reasoning skills to extend their understanding of their reading.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 24 lessons, of which 14 were joint observations with either the headteacher, deputy headteacher or the assistant headteacher. Inspectors also observed pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes and attended two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with different groups of pupils. The inspectors listened to a sample of pupils in Years 4 and 6 read, and discussed their reading with them.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, and two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation, including the school's own information on how well pupils are doing, improvement plans and records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching. They also looked at minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors took account of the 28 responses received from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View). In addition, inspectors spoke to parents in the playground at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors also considered the 25 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Avtar Sherri, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gill Walley	Additional Inspector
Velia Hartland	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary Magdalen Catholic Junior School is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic groups, with the largest group having a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is above average. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- There have been changes in the teaching staff, as well as in senior and middle leaders, since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers always challenge the more-able pupils in lessons to enable them to reach the highest levels
 - teachers consistently give pupils time to respond to their marking and comments in order to help pupils to understand how to improve their work
 - pupils do not always have enough opportunities to apply their reasoning skills and to extend their understanding of their reading.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points, and their attainment is rising.
- In 2013, pupils' attainment was significantly above average in writing, and above average in mathematics. Attainment in reading was broadly average.
- Pupils enjoy reading and use their phonic skills (the links between letters and sounds) to read difficult and unfamiliar words. They have good access to a range of books in the school library. Pupils read regularly in class. Teachers also encourage them to read at home and their parents to sign their reading records. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their reasoning skills and to reflect on their reading.
- Attainment in writing is high because pupils have good opportunities to write at length in English, and to apply their writing skills in other subjects.
- Pupils do well in mathematics. The mental starters in lessons spark their interest and engagement. They enjoy problem solving and investigative work in mathematics.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their listening and speaking skills and to build their vocabulary. For example, they often discuss their work with other pupils. This particularly helps pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, their progress is similar to, and sometimes better than, their peers.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those supported by the additional funding, make good progress.
- The most-able learners make good progress. However, teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge to enable them to reach the higher levels of attainment.
- In 2013, the school was successful in narrowing the attainment gap in all subjects at the end of Year 6 between pupils supported by additional funding and their peers. Their attainment in all subjects was above the national average, but they were about six months behind their peers in reading, three months behind in writing and rather less in mathematics. However, recent school information shows that these pupils are now making slightly better progress than their peers in reading and writing, but not in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good.
- Teachers are good at asking pupils questions in order to develop their understanding and engage them in their learning. Teachers also foster good relationships with pupils, which support good learning.
- Teachers check pupils' learning closely in lessons to identify any misconceptions and to adapt the work accordingly. In a Year 6 lesson on 'outstanding vocabulary', for example, the teacher quickly recognised that some pupils were struggling. She used the opportunity to show them how to use descriptive language in their writing to move their learning on.
- Teachers encourage pupils to make good use of their targets in lessons to check their own learning, and to recognise what they need to do to achieve the next level. In this way, pupils keep track on what they have achieved and look to the next steps in their learning. Pupils' targets are shared with parents to keep them informed about their children's progress.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work and give pupils guidance about improvement. However, they do not always provide time for pupils to respond to comments and to apply their advice.
- In some lessons, teachers challenge well and make pupils think hard about their work. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils plotted points to create a triangle and rotated the triangle through different degrees. This made pupils think hard about the best way to rotate the shape and complete the task. However, on occasion, teachers miss opportunities to challenge the more-able pupils by giving them harder work, so that they reach higher levels of

attainment.

- Pupils who fall behind in their work receive effective support from teachers and the skilled teaching assistants, and catch up.
- The school makes good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 6 lesson on 'creating a story board', pupils used tablets to capture freeze frames for different scenes as they learn about the world of advertising.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good, both in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, as is shown by their good attendance, and have very positive attitudes to their learning. They are kind, courteous and respectful to each other and to adults. This contributes well to harmonious breaktimes and calm and orderly lunchtimes. Pupils are proud of the school. They make sure that there is no litter around the school, and that the floor and tables in the lunch hall are kept clean.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in a few lessons not all pupils display a real thirst for learning. Some pupils also depend too much on staff to help them out with their learning.
- Pupils from all backgrounds get on really well with each other, and incidents of name calling or bullying are rare. There have been no extremist incidents in the school.
- Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given, for example as members of the school council, as playground pals, or as prefects in Year 6.
- The school manages the behaviour of pupils well, including those pupils who have particular behavioural needs. This has reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions, which is well below the national level. There have been no permanent exclusions.
- All members of staff who completed the questionnaire, and most parents who responded to the online survey, agreed that behaviour is good in the school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils say they feel safe in the school. If they do have any concerns about their safety and well-being, they have full confidence in members of staff to deal with incidents of poor behaviour quickly and effectively.
- Pupils understand the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and know what to do if it should happen.
- Pupils know how to use the internet safely. They also understand the importance of road and fire safety, and how to keep themselves safe.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other leaders, including governors, are ambitious for the school, and have worked together effectively to bring about successful and rapid improvement since the previous inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching is good and pupils achieve well.
- The leadership and management are not outstanding because there is not enough outstanding teaching to ensure that pupils make rapid progress across all year groups.
- The effectiveness of middle managers has improved. Their roles now include observing the quality of teaching and checking pupils' progress in their books. They hold teachers accountable for the progress of their pupils. They produce action plans to improve the learning in their areas of responsibility, and these plans feed into the school development plan.
- Leaders have put in place robust systems to track pupils' progress. This has been effective in identifying pupils, both individuals and groups, who are falling behind in their learning. These pupils are given timely support to help them catch up with their peers. In this way, senior leaders ensure that equal opportunities are promoted well in the school.
- There are effective training and support in place to help teachers to improve the quality of their teaching. Arrangements to set targets for improvement for members of staff are robust, and

leaders ensure that there is a clear link between performance and progression up the pay scales.

- There is a broad range of subjects taught in the school, which offer good opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills. Pupils are keen to learn from each other, both in the classroom and around the school. Music is a real strength of the school and pupils enjoy playing different instruments and singing in assemblies, which give them a good sense of togetherness. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively.
- The school uses the primary sport funding well to expand the range of activities and sports on offer, and to increase pupils' participation in these activities. Teachers have also received additional training to improve their teaching of physical education and sports, for example dance and tennis.
- Links with parents have improved since the previous inspection. The school provides workshops for parents on how they can work more effectively with their children to improve their progress. Most parents who responded to the online survey agreed that they receive good information about their child's education.
- The local authority has provided the school with effective support. This has helped the school to bring about rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and pupil progress since the previous inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors visit the school regularly and know the school well, including its strengths and areas for improvement. They share the ambitions of leaders and the staff to improve the achievement of pupils. They have received good training to understand information on pupils' performance, and they use this knowledge effectively to challenge senior leaders and to hold them to account. They have a good understanding of how well their school is doing compared to other schools nationally. They also have a secure understanding about the quality of teaching in different year groups, and how pay and promotion are linked to performance. For example, they know that there is not yet enough outstanding teaching to bring about rapid progress in pupils' learning. They have the appropriate expertise to ensure that the budget is managed efficiently and that allocated resources have a positive impact on pupils. For example, they know about how the pupil premium funding and sport funding are used, and the impact on pupils' outcomes. They have attended training on safeguarding, and ensure that the school meets all 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	101542
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	442135

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Wilson
Headteacher	Maria Nowicka
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 December 2012
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