

Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School

Belgrave Avenue, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 1HT

Inspection dates

12–13 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders at Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School have created a culture where everyone feels safe, valued and loved. Pupils flourish academically and socially in a caring environment.
- Staff and governors share the headteacher's drive and ambition for all pupils. High expectations have led to excellent improvements in outcomes, and pupils reach very high standards.
- Leaders ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make substantial and sustained progress.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that provides rich experiences and opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the care and support provided by dedicated staff. They value the opportunities that staff give their children through an excellent range of wider curriculum activities.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school. Many of the pupils spoken with said that their teachers really care about them and that they make learning fun.
- Teachers strong subject knowledge allows them to use questioning effectively. This contributes to the excellent progress that pupils make.
- Teachers immerse pupils in carefully planned activities that promote deep learning.
- High-quality teaching ensures that pupils in all year groups make exceptionally strong progress. Where progress has been slower, for a small proportion of pupils in mathematics, there is now evidence of rapid improvement.
- Pupils are extremely polite and they have impeccable manners. Their exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning contribute to the high standards that they achieve.
- The provision in the early years is good and improving. The very youngest children settle quickly in an environment that nurtures, excites and stimulates them as learners.
- Leaders are determined to continue to improve the curriculum for children in the early years. However, leaders need more time to embed the improvements in all areas of children's learning, to ensure that a higher proportion achieve at the highest standard.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further enrich and embed the improvements made across the early years in all areas of learning, so that a higher proportion of children achieve at the highest standard.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders have extremely high expectations. They set high standards for themselves, their staff and their pupils. They have established a culture of continual improvement. Pupils thrive in this extremely calm and caring environment and their achievements are outstanding.
- Leaders at all levels demonstrate drive and a commitment to high levels of professionalism. They model strong teamwork and promote a passion for learning in staff and pupils. Leaders provide education of the highest quality; only the very best is good enough.
- Leaders have developed rigorous processes to maintain outstanding teaching. Ongoing staff training is a priority and leaders make sure that staff have the right skills to deliver the highest quality of education that meets the needs of all pupils. Regular training for staff ensures that their knowledge of all subjects is strong.
- Staff at all levels work with other colleagues and professionals to share their expertise. This contributes to the strong progress that pupils make. Teachers new to teaching said that leaders and colleagues provide them with strong support. Staff are proud to be part of Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School.
- Middle leaders have the same drive and determination as senior leaders to provide the highest-quality education for pupils. Their strong subject knowledge, coupled with consistently high-quality monitoring procedures ensure that they are well equipped to identify areas of strength and areas for further improvement within their subject specialisms. They regularly hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make. The effect of their work is evident in all year groups, where an increasing proportion of pupils are reaching the higher standards.
- Leaders are reflective in their practice. Consequently, they refine their provision to maximise learning opportunities to meet the needs of pupils. For example, where leaders uncovered slower rates of progress for a very small proportion of pupils in mathematics, they took effective action to remedy the deficiencies. As a result, leaders restored strong rates of progress.
- Leaders have effectively developed activities that provide rich experiences to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders also provide exceedingly well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are well equipped for life in modern Britain.
- On a daily basis, pupils show courtesy towards one another. Pupils demonstrate calm and productive learning behaviour and high levels of cooperation and respect. A pupil spoken to during the inspection said: 'We do not tolerate any type of racism. No matter who you are, you are special.'
- Leaders have implemented a curriculum that is not only broad and balanced, but also exciting and creative. Learning opportunities provided ignite the interests and enjoyment of pupils. For example, pupils studying the use of watercolours to paint a landscape first looked at how to mix shades. Then pupils had the opportunity to practise and then refine their skills. They then evaluated their own work. One pupil

said: 'I like the shades I have used but think I needed to mix different shades of green for the trees next time to improve my work.'

- Pupils are given opportunities to use and apply their literacy skills. For example, in history, the development of research skills and vocabulary in a series of lessons culminates in an accurately written report about life as a Roman in Britain.
- Leaders are highly skilled in identifying the barriers to learning for a small proportion of disadvantaged pupils. They use the pupil premium funding very effectively. Leaders focus on providing enrichment experiences, as well as academic, social and emotional support for pupils and their families. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make excellent progress and a higher proportion achieve at the highest standard by the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders use additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities very effectively. Leaders diligently look at information about pupils' progress and carry out observations of pupils' learning. This contributes to identifying what pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities need to help them learn better. Leaders work closely with other professionals and ensure that staff have training, so they can meet the needs of these pupils. This contributes considerably to the outstanding progress these pupils make during their time in school.
- The physical education (PE) and sports funding for schools is used very effectively. For example, leaders employ a teacher to deliver a wide range of sports activities and improve teachers' subject knowledge and skills. Pupils' participation in PE has increased, and this has enabled teams to take part in a number of tournaments, such as the town sports events.
- Through the additional funding provided by the school, pupils have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, taught by visiting teachers. Pupils enjoy this experience.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about leaders and staff. They appreciate the support and care given to their children and the opportunities that they have in school. Parents of younger pupils are very pleased with how quickly their children settle into the routines at school. Parents of older pupils were especially complimentary about how well pupils are prepared for the next stage in their education.

Governance of the school

- There are clear roles and responsibilities within the structure of the trust. The governing body has ensured that governors have a wide range of relevant skills and expertise. They attend training to keep up to date with new initiatives. Governors understand the school's priorities for future development and the challenges that face the school.
- Governors rigorously support and challenge leaders. Governors are also held robustly to account by the board of trustees.
- Governors are very involved in the life of the school. They look at pupils' work, monitor the progress that pupils make and talk to pupils and parents. They work effectively with leaders, sharing the passion and commitment of all who work at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders' work in keeping pupils safe is of the highest standard. Safeguarding is an integral part of the curriculum. Consequently, pupils feel safe, valued and well cared for.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements, protocols and practices are fit for purpose. These include online safety and applying the necessary filters to keep pupils safe on the internet.
- Staff work very closely with the local community, other professionals and families. They receive regular training and updates on potential areas of risk for the pupils. Leaders plan the curriculum carefully so that pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers and support staff demonstrate a strong knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn. A culture of high expectations and top-quality teaching contribute to the substantial and sustained progress that pupils make across year groups and across subjects.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are highly effective. Teachers know pupils extremely well. As a result, teachers plan activities that meet pupils' needs and excite pupils' imaginations. Excellent relationships also contribute to pupils' exemplary behaviour, their positive attitudes to learning and the excellent progress that they make.
- Very skilled support staff work effectively with pupils to enhance their learning. The support and challenge that they provide in lessons contribute to pupils making outstanding progress over time. Pupils are excited about learning. They are extremely proud of the progress that they make and the quality of their work.
- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to inspire and motivate pupils. They are very skilled in developing key skills for specific subjects. Pupils understand what they are learning through well-crafted activities. Staff use highly effective questions to extend pupils' learning and deepen their understanding.
- Teachers are also quick to address any misconceptions through their skilful questioning of pupils' understanding. Older pupils, in particular, are extremely articulate in explaining the processes and skills that they use to solve problems in mathematics. Teachers ensure that pupils know what to do to improve their work and how to reflect on their learning. Pupils understand that it is acceptable to make mistakes and one pupil commented: 'That's how you learn – by making mistakes.' As a result, teachers ensure that pupils make high rates of progress and that the differences between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally diminish by the end of key stage 2.
- Teachers have a love of reading. Consequently, they enthuse their pupils to read for pleasure. Teachers ensure that pupils' progress in phonics enables them to tackle unfamiliar words. Pupils are confident when reading to each other and to adults. The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. Pupils apply their knowledge, skills and understanding extremely well in other subject areas across the curriculum.

- The teaching of writing is exceedingly effective. Pupils produce work of an extremely high quality, and an increasing number of pupils are working at the highest standard, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Highly skilled support staff work with pupils who make slower progress and, as a result, they catch up rapidly.
- The learning environment around school and in classrooms is enhanced by beautiful displays that celebrate pupils' achievements and support their learning. Leaders ensure that these displays are always of the highest quality, reinforcing pupils' sense of pride in themselves and their school.
- Teachers ensure that parents can support their children's learning through a variety of excellent workshops. As a result, pupils enjoy completing their homework, which complements their work in school. A pupil spoken to during the inspection said: 'I've been learning my times tables at home with my dad and I'm much better at my maths now.'

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Relationships between staff and pupils are particularly strong. They show a genuine warmth and respect for each other. Pupils feel safe. They know that adults care about them and will listen to them.
- Leaders give the personal development and welfare of the most vulnerable pupils a high priority. The family service worker, who works across the trust, and other staff go above and beyond what is expected of them on a daily basis. They support pupils and their families to overcome some of the challenges that they face. Parents spoke very highly of the care given to their children and the support that they receive from staff.
- Leaders provide an exciting range of enrichment experiences to raise aspirations and expand opportunities for pupils. For example, pupils are encouraged to learn to play an instrument and they took part in the Shakespeare festival, performing 'Twelfth Night' with other schools at a national theatre. Pupils spoken with said that it was an amazing experience.
- Pupils enjoy the many clubs that they can be part of before and after school. They spoke enthusiastically about their choir that sings at the Manchester Arena and the array of sports tournaments that they enter. One pupil said: 'We are winning lots of medals and competitions, especially in cross-country.' Pupils said that they particularly enjoy the residential trips in key stage 2 because they have the opportunity to build relationships, develop resilience, learn survival techniques and develop cooperation skills. They can apply these skills in everyday learning at school.
- Pupils are taught to be caring and thoughtful. They are proud of the contribution that they make as active citizens in the wider community. For example, the choir sing for elderly residents from the local care home, and pupils raise funds for local charities. Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously.
- Pupils know what bullying is and proudly reported that there has been no bullying in their school since they introduced a new anti-bullying programme. One pupil spoken

with during the inspection said: 'I think that every school should have an anti-bullying programme. No one should be made to feel less than they are.' Many other pupils echoed this sentiment.

- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including online. They spoke with confidence about how adults listen to them carefully, hear their concerns and their worries and accept their suggestions. One pupil spoken with said: 'We are really proud to be at Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School. Everyone comes to learn and make friends.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are friendly and polite. They have impeccable manners and high levels of respect towards each other and adults in the school. They socialise well, particularly during lunchtimes. Pupils play harmoniously together.
- Pupils' conduct around school and in lessons is exemplary. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school as a result of the extremely positive relationship between pupils and adults.
- Leaders have a deep understanding of pupils' individual circumstances. They have successfully used a range of bespoke strategies, including play therapy, to support the social and emotional development of a small group of pupils who did not always make the right choices about their behaviour. Consequently, behaviour and progress rates for these pupils have improved considerably.
- Pupils understand the very clear behaviour systems in school that promote positive behaviour extremely well. Pupils are confident that adults deal with any negative behaviour promptly and in an appropriate and consistent way.
- Pupils are eager to learn and they value the opportunities provided by their teachers to improve their learning. During lessons, conversations between pupils and other adults are very purposeful and focused on learning.
- The extremely positive attitude of pupils is one of the main reasons they achieve such high standards in their learning. The pride that pupils take in their work is exemplified in the extremely high-quality presentation seen in their books and the excellent displays of their work around the school.
- Attendance is above the national average. Staff have worked diligently with families to bring about a rapid improvement in attendance of those pupils who were often absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils' outcomes continue to improve rapidly. The provisional data for 2017 showed that the vast majority of pupils, from relatively low starting points, were working above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion on pupils working at the highest standard in reading and writing was also above the national average in key stage 1 and key stage 2. The difference is diminishing between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally by the end of key

stage 2, and a greater proportion are working at the higher levels.

- The work seen in pupils' books and learning observed during the inspection confirm the accuracy of the school's own detailed assessment information. Pupils in all year groups make exceptionally strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The vast majority of pupils work at, or above, the standards expected for their age. The proportion of pupils working at the highest standard has increased, particularly in mathematics in key stage 2.
- Where progress is slower for a very small proportion of pupils in mathematics, particularly in Year 1, there is evidence of rapid improvement. Leaders have ensured that staff have the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need to ensure that pupils catch up quickly. Consequently, a much higher proportion are achieving at the highest standard by the end of key stage 1.
- Leaders are highly skilled in identifying pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Accurate identification ensures that pupils quickly receive the targeted support that they need to overcome their barriers to learning. As a result, these pupils often make accelerated progress. Where slower progress is identified, swift action is taken to review the effectiveness of the support that they receive. This ensures that pupils catch up quickly.
- The progress that pupils make in phonics is outstanding. The proportion of pupils who have reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has been above the national average for the last three years, and has increased each year. Every child in Year 1 reached the expected standard in 2017. This means that pupils have a strong foundation to become very successful readers and are extremely well prepared for the next steps in their education.

Early years provision

Good

- In September 2017, the Nursery joined the academy trust under the management of the school. Since then, leaders have taken effective action to bring about rapid improvements to the provision for the youngest children. They have also enriched the curriculum in all areas of learning. However, leaders have not fully embedded the curriculum across the early years.
- There have been changes in staffing, and professional development is a priority. Staff receive excellent training so that they have the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to teach the youngest children. Staff work closely with other professionals and each other to share their expertise. This supports ongoing rapid improvements to the early years provision.
- Leaders and staff have created a bright and caring environment in which children thrive. The majority of children enter with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below those typical for their age. Leaders and staff work closely and effectively with parents. Consequently, children settle quickly and make good progress.
- Leadership is very effective. Leaders regularly collect information about children's learning to accurately identify their next steps. This is particularly the case in reading, writing and mathematics in the Reception class.
- Teachers plan activities that build on the children's knowledge, skills and

understanding. As a result, an improving proportion of children make accelerated progress. The vast majority of children reach a good level of development by the time they leave Reception, and are ready for Year 1.

- Leaders are building on effective strategies and embedding new systems to ensure that teachers use the information that they gather about children's learning in all areas of the curriculum. As a result, activities accurately match children's interests and capture their imaginations.
- Leaders identify the key barriers to disadvantaged children's learning and they use the additional funding extremely well. As a result, progress rates are improving for disadvantaged children.
- Staff promote children's independent skills successfully through clear and well-established routines that contribute to the children's ongoing safety and welfare.
- Teachers provide opportunities throughout the day for children to work collaboratively to solve problems. For example, a group of Reception children learning outside were excitedly engaged in an activity to find words in the ball pit. Supported by staff, they helped each other to accurately sound out the words that they found. Children were pleased with their achievements and the progress they made. One child said, 'I can read that now.'
- Relationships between children and staff are effective. Consequently, positive behaviour is nurtured by staff, and children learn in an orderly environment. Children in the Nursery playing a phonics matching game, confidently took turns and sounded out the initial sounds to match the pictures. Any mispronunciations were swiftly corrected in a very positive and supportive way by skilled staff.
- The children who have SEN and/or disabilities in the early years are very well supported. Staff have received extra training which allows them to meet the needs of this group of children. Parents speak highly of the care, guidance and support that their children receive from staff.
- Safeguarding arrangements in the early years are effective. All statutory welfare requirements, including those for two-year olds in school, are met.

School details

Unique reference number	141826
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10042502

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Catherine Ingram
Headteacher	Sacha Humphries
Telephone number	01260 274690
Website	www.thelifecloud.net/schools/SaintMarysCatholicPrimarySchool
Email address	head@saintmaryscongleton.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish on their website, including the governance and management structure of the multi-academy trust.
- Since the last inspection of your predecessor school, the school has joined The Holy Family of Nazareth Catholic Academy Trust.
- The school is smaller-than-the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is lower than the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than the national

average. However, the proportion of pupils who are supported by an education, health and care plan is above the national average.

- In September 2017, the Nursery joined the academy trust under the management of the school. It includes provision for two-year olds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, carrying out some joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils. They also talked with others informally around the school. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with three members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector met with a representative from the trust.
- Inspectors took account of the 36 responses and 21 written responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' survey. Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about the school's performance and a selection of policies, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Moira Atkins	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Kynaston	Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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