

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Ward Street, Prescot, Merseyside, L34 6JJ

Inspection dates 30–31 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- All pupils make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Year 6, standards are above, and sometimes well above, the national average.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the nursery. They settle quickly and learn new skills and knowledge rapidly.
- All teaching is good and there is some which is outstanding. Teachers plan interesting lessons which are set at the right level for pupils of different abilities.
- Pupils known to be eligible for additional government funding, together with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good, and on occasion, outstanding progress. This is due to the high-quality support they receive.
- Pupils work hard, behave well and feel safe in school. They are polite, friendly and a joy to be with.
- Parents have very positive views of the school and would strongly recommend the school to others.
- The headteacher provides clear direction and has the full support of his staff. Actions taken by leaders have led to improvements in achievement and teaching since the last inspection.
- Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support and continuously look for ways to further improve the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes adults do not ask pupils questions that make them think hard enough.
- Pupils do not have many opportunities to plan their own activities or use their own ideas.
- Leaders do not always make full use of the information available on pupils' progress to help improve the quality of teaching and accelerate progress even further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They saw 16 lessons, one of which was jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with pupils, teachers, the headteacher, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) together with other survey information collected by the school. They also spoke informally to parents as they brought their children to school.
- Questionnaires from 14 staff were received and their views taken into account.
- The inspection team listened to pupils read, spoke with them about their learning and looked at the work in their books.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's checks on how well it is doing, the school improvement plan, data on pupils' current progress, leaders' reports following lesson observations, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is similar in size to an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority or children whose parents are in the armed forces. At this school, it is used to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is average.
- A breakfast club operates on the school site and is managed by the governing body. This was visited during the 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 proportion of outstanding teaching and thereby accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - questions are always used effectively to probe pupils' understanding and develop their thinking
 - teachers plan activities which encourage pupils to think and develop their own ideas and become confident, independent learners.
- Make the effectiveness of leadership and management outstanding by:
 - developing the skills of leaders to use all available information about pupils' progress to lead to further improvements in the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge which are broadly in line with children of a similar age, except in mathematics where their skills are lower. They settle very quickly and make good progress, especially in their personal, social and physical development. This is because teachers provide a wide range of worthwhile learning activities.
- Pupils build effectively on this positive start and continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. As a result, a greater proportion make better than expected progress between Reception Year and Year 2. For example, the proportion of children reaching the expected level in mathematics at the end of Reception in 2011 was 30% but by the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013, this had increased to 80%. Progress in Key Stage 2 is also good and attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average, and on occasion, well above average, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Reading is taught well from the outset. Children in nursery learn to recognise and sound out letters of the alphabet (phonics). This is further developed in the Reception class where they begin to blend and decode simple words. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the required level in the national phonic screen check at the end of Year 1 is above average, and by Year 2, most are fluent and competent readers. The numbers of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 have also increased and are well-above national figures. Additional support is provided for those who are struggling, and this ensures all pupils make good progress.
- Raising achievement in writing has been a recent school priority. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating, especially for boys, due to whole-school training, raised staff awareness and increased opportunities for pupils to write at length in a range of subjects. Writing tasks are well structured and supported, often using real contexts. Over time, pupils achieve well in mathematics and more pupils are reaching the higher levels. However, the school's own data and work in pupils' books show that progress of pupils currently on roll is not as strong as in reading or writing, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide additional support in literacy and numeracy and to fund visits and extra-curricular activities. As a result, the eligible pupils make at least good progress, in line with their peers, or on occasion, above their peers. There is no gap in the progress these pupils make compared with others in the school but attainment gaps fluctuate due to the small numbers of pupils eligible. In 2013, Year 6 pupils were approximately three terms behind others in their class in all subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported in lessons and outside lessons by well-trained teaching assistants. Those with specific difficulties also receive specialist external support. As a result, these pupils make good progress and those with statements make outstanding progress.
- Additional provision is also made for those who are higher ability. Extra classes are taught by a local high school. Work set is more challenging. This has resulted in pupils reaching higher levels of attainment. This also demonstrates leaders' commitment to providing equal opportunities for all pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and there are some examples where it is outstanding. Across the school teachers develop positive relationships with pupils. It is clear that pupils like and respect their teachers, and that their feelings are reciprocated. This has a beneficial impact on pupils' motivation and learning.
- Teachers plan their lessons well in order to meet the needs of pupils of different capabilities. They know what they want pupils to learn and their explanations are clear. Consequently, pupils are able to start their tasks confidently, knowing what they are expected to achieve.

- Teaching assistants form a strong partnership with teachers, are well trained, and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- In lessons where pupils benefit from outstanding teaching, tasks pinpoint pupils' learning needs and activities provided are exciting and allow pupils to build on their existing knowledge and skills. For example, in a nursery lesson, the highly imaginative, well-planned activities captured children's imaginations and ensured they were engrossed and fully engaged in a wide range of tasks both indoors and outdoors. At the same time, the teacher skilfully assessed small groups of children, checking their levels of understanding by asking probing questions in order to plan for the next stage of their learning.
- In the main, teachers use questions well. However, in some lessons they miss opportunities to probe pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking through focused questions. Sometimes teachers accept brief responses when pupils would benefit from being expected to explain their answers more fully. In addition, pupils do not have many opportunities to plan their own activities or use their own ideas. This restricts their ability to work independently and some are overly reliant on the teachers' direction.
- Marking is thorough and is usually effective. Teachers provide helpful comments which show pupils how they can improve their work and allow them some 'fix it' time to carry out corrections or improvements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and want to achieve well. They behave well in and around school and know and follow the school rules. They are polite and respectful to both adults and their fellow pupils.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding as pupils have too few opportunities to use their own ideas or initiative, or find things out for themselves. In a few lessons their behaviour is passive and compliant and lacks the enthusiasm and motivation seen in the very best lessons.
- All parents, staff and pupils who expressed a view say that behaviour is good and pupils are kept safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including verbal, physical and cyber-bullying. They are, however, adamant that there is no bullying in their school but are confident that if they have a problem, they can tell an adult and it is quickly sorted.
- The school records show that there are very few incidents of poor behaviour but where incidents occur, swift and effective action is taken to resolve this. This ensures behaviour is consistently good and as a result, there have been no exclusions.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of potential dangers, including using the internet and those associated with fire, water, roads and strangers.
- The school's breakfast club provides a happy and social start to the day. Pupils are well cared for and when school begins, they have a positive attitude to learning.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is shown in their attendance which is above average over time.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by governors and other leaders, leads and manages the school highly effectively. Together they have created a strong sense of teamwork where staff morale is high.
- Leaders' own evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development are accurate. Action plans are generated to address areas of concern. Actions taken have led to improvements in achievement and teaching since the last inspection.
- Checks on the quality of teaching are carried out by different leaders and pupils' progress is carefully tracked. However, the range of information collected is not always brought together well enough to pinpoint where teaching could promote more rapid progress.

- The headteacher sets annual targets for staff based on the school's own improvement priorities. Expectations have been raised and these targets are now more challenging than previously. A high emphasis is placed on professional development for all staff. The school is part of a local collaboration of schools and this has enabled staff to share their own good practice and learn from other colleagues.
- A wide range of subjects are taught and links are made to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Visits, visitors and school clubs also provide memorable experiences and these contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a good understanding and appreciation of those from different backgrounds and are respectful of others' beliefs.
- Sports and physical activities are strongly promoted and the recently received sports funding is being used to employ a specialist sports teacher to train staff and develop pupils' physical well-being.
- The local authority has an accurate overview of the school and it keeps a check on how well pupils are achieving. They provide funding for the local schools' collaboration which in turn provides valuable support and training opportunities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly effective due to their strong and diverse knowledge and experience. They regularly visit school and talk to pupils to check that they are doing well. They have a good understanding of data and know which groups are achieving well and where improvements are needed. This is also linked to their knowledge of teaching and their responsibilities for ensuring that pay awards are only agreed where teachers demonstrate that they meet challenging targets. They set targets for the headteacher and make sure that these are carefully linked to the school improvement plan. They provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support, and question leaders regularly to make sure that they have full and accurate information. Training is undertaken to help governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively, for example, in relation to safeguarding and finance. As a result, these aspects are fully met.

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	104459
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	426212

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Johnson
Headteacher	Haydn Boyle
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2008
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