

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Darkinson Lane, Lea Town, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 0RJ

Inspection dates

2–3 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Effective provision in the early years ensures that children develop a genuine eagerness to learn new things. They build very positive relationships with each other and the adults around them and achieve well.
- Pupils across the range of abilities make good progress throughout their time at this school. Those who have additional needs are provided with a good level of support and most make the same good progress as others in the school.
- The standards that pupils attain by the end of Year 2, and by the end of Year 6, reflect their good achievement.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers provide exciting learning experiences for pupils that help them to achieve well.
- A wide range of subjects and topics engage pupils' interests well. They enjoy being challenged to extend their knowledge and develop their skills. This prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils settle extremely well to their work and collaboration with classmates is strong. They show high levels of respect for others during their playtimes.
- Pupils say they feel very safe at school and learn how to keep safe in other environments.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Visitors and trips bring learning to life. Pupils enthusiastically engage in sports and many learn to play a musical instrument.
- The headteacher has effectively led several whole-school changes since the previous inspection. In a relatively short space of time, there have been significant improvements. Staff work well as a team in supporting pupils' personal development and academic achievement.
- All leaders, including the governing body, work well as a team. Their successful actions have a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. The school continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small minority of pupils find it difficult to apply their numeracy skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Some pupils often make errors in spelling and grammar.
- Pupils are not always helped to learn from their mistakes.
- Some middle leaders are at an early stage of developing skills to drive improvement in their areas of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in lessons taught by teachers. Two of the lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher. Sessions led by teaching assistants were observed and the inspector also listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, the headteacher, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, development plans, records of pupils' standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work in their books.
- There were 30 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which were taken into account. The 22 responses to the staff questionnaire were also reviewed. In addition, the inspector spoke informally to parents at the start and end of the school days.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by the pupil premium, is lower than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- Almost all pupils are White British. A much smaller than average proportion is from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Provision in the early years is full time.
- All pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- An increasing proportion of pupils join the school other than at the usual times.
- Several staff have joined the school since the previous inspection, including the headteacher, who was appointed in September 2014.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has received the Eco-Schools Bronze Award.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who make more than the expected progress and build on existing strengths in teaching by:
 - helping some pupils to apply their numeracy skills better to solve problems
 - encouraging pupils to use accurate grammar and precise pronunciation of words when they are speaking
 - helping all pupils to learn from their mistakes
 - providing opportunities across all subjects to help pupils improve their spelling
 - ensuring that when pupils choose their own activities in the early years, there are enough opportunities to reinforce their numeracy and literacy skills.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by developing the skills of middle leaders in helping pupils to achieve better.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher knows every pupil at the school very well. She is highly ambitious for each one of them both in terms of their personal development and academic achievement. She deservedly has the full confidence and support of staff and governors and demonstrates her expertise, skill and determination by leading school improvement, for example, by raising the quality of teaching and eradicating inadequate teaching.
- Priorities are clearly stated in the school's improvement plan, and the school's systems to judge its performance are both realistic and rigorous. Overall, leaders effectively check on the quality of learning and teaching in the school and have a clear view of how they can continue to raise standards. However, some middle leaders are at an early stage in learning the skills to check on their areas of responsibility and their influence on school improvement is not yet fully developed.
- Staff are given goals to ensure pupils make good progress and this is directly linked to salary progression. The headteacher is highly effective in building a strong team of staff and sets specific targets to raise pupils' achievement. She leads by example.
- Care is taken to promote good achievement for all, including pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium. The funding for these pupils is spent well to meet their needs. This confirms the school's commitment to making sure that there is no discrimination and that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed in this harmonious community where good relations flourish.
- Pupils experience a rich and vibrant curriculum. Learning outdoors, trips and visitors to the school capture the imagination of pupils. For example, during the inspection, Years 5 and 6 embarked on a trip to a recycling plant. This reflects the high priority that the school places on developing young citizens of the future with a strong sense of responsibility towards their local community and to global issues. Pupils are involved in a raft of opportunities before school, during lunchtimes and after school, for example, in sports, prayer meetings, cooking and learning cross-stitch. This reflects the willingness of all staff to give freely of their own time for the benefit of pupils.
- The school prepares pupils very well for life in modern British society. For example, excellent attention is given to promoting spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A member of the Salvation Army recently visited the school to talk about its work with people from all walks of life in Britain and overseas. Preparation is currently underway to celebrate World Faiths Week. These experiences contribute to promoting British values and respect for those who have different faiths and cultures to their own.
- The primary school sports funding has been used well to increase opportunities for sport and physical development. Specialist coaches work with staff and older pupils who are now able to lead sporting activities at lunchtimes. New equipment has been acquired and pupils develop their skills in a wide range of sports, including tennis, football and netball. Records are kept to ensure all pupils are provided with opportunities to help them to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- The local authority provides very light-touch support for this good school in recognition of the strengths of leadership and management at St Mary's.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly committed to and supportive of the school. They bring with them a wide range of skills from within and beyond education. Those who spoke with the inspector have a good understanding of data showing pupils' achievement and how this compares with other schools. Each half term, they are kept well informed of pupils' achievement by the headteacher. Governors have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching and how it is directly linked to the salary structure of staff. They have worked closely with the headteacher in tackling underperformance. The school's finances are efficiently managed.
 - Governors are conscientious in the way they undertake their statutory duties. Required checks on adults are recorded and staff are well trained in child protection. Governors make sure safeguarding arrangements meet requirements so that pupils and staff are safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- There is an extremely high level of mutual respect between all adults and pupils. Pupils have a remarkably

positive attitude toward learning; they say they really enjoy their school work because teachers make learning exciting.

- Pupils are polite and very considerate toward each other both in class and around the school. Older pupils really appreciate the opportunities that they get to help younger friends. Pupils are elected by the school council to become members of the 'buddy squad'. In this role, they ensure an eye is kept on any pupil who may be needing particular support and attention.
- Pupils are confident that their opinions count and make a difference at St Mary's School and they feel exceptionally proud of this. When they start school, children in the early years assess any risks they may find across the school and devise a list of written rules together. They develop an exemplary attitude toward learning from a very early age. All Key Stage 2 pupils were involved in writing an equality statement recently. This highlights the fact that everyone is unique and deserves the same opportunities.
- An increasing number of pupils join the school other than at the usual times because of its very good reputation. All parents who spoke to the inspector believe their children are happy at school and this was reflected in the responses to Parent View.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils say they feel extremely safe in school and all parents that responded to the online questionnaire agreed that their children are safe and very well cared for.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber and homophobic bullying. They are very clear that everyone is unique and deserves respect. Pupils who spoke with the inspector claimed that there was no bullying at St Mary's and school records confirm this.
- Health and safety are always high on the school agenda. Pupils told the inspector how they are very well informed about keeping safe when they go on residential trips to outdoor activity centres. These excellent opportunities have a significant impact in broadening pupils' horizons and ensure they learn about safety and responsibilities beyond their own community.
- Attendance is consistently higher than the national average. This reflects how much the pupils enjoy being at school and the excellent way in which the school works together with parents to keep them safe.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils make good progress because of the effective quality of teaching in a wide range of subjects. This is confirmed by work in pupils' books and the school's records of pupils' progress.
- Teachers use questions skilfully to assess pupils' learning throughout lessons. Pupils discuss their ideas and learn from each other. Staff make sure that there is a good range of resources available to pupils so that they can help themselves and each other when they are a little unsure about what to do next.
- Phonics (the links between letters and sounds) is taught exceptionally well and this has led to year-on-year improvements in pupils' performance in the Year 1 screening checks. Those who read to the inspector showed how well they could blend the sounds of different letters to work out unfamiliar words. Pupils develop a love of books from an early age and this was seen first-hand during the inspection.
- The headteacher has led the drive for improvements to the quality of teaching across the school. Teachers make mathematics relevant. For example, Key Stage 1 pupils were clearly enthralled when learning how to tell the time. Activities were well planned to meet the wide range of pupils' ability. Some pupils were using both analogue and digital skills to record key times during the course of a school day and this brought learning to life for pupils.
- Since the previous inspection, a wider range of opportunities for writing have been introduced, motivating girls and boys alike. In Key Stage 2, pupils were writing a letter to their parents as if they had just arrived at Hogwarts Castle. As they discussed a video clip, they embarked on telling their 'talk partners' what they imagined they would see, hear and feel. This helped them to draw upon a wide range of vocabulary when writing. Pupils were highly motivated and clearly enjoyed their writing, with pupils at break time wanting to read their letters to the inspector.
- Evidence in books illustrates that some pupils make frequent spelling errors and use grammar incorrectly.
- Some older Key Stage 2 pupils have not been soundly enough taught how to apply their basic numerical knowledge to solving problems. As a result, this tends to be a weaker aspect of these pupils' achievement in mathematics.
- Marking is usually of a high quality. However, in some instances pupils are not sufficiently helped to learn from their mistakes.

- Effective teamwork by teachers and teaching assistants ensures a high level of support for all groups of pupils.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected level in the Year 1 reading screening check is higher than the national average. This is because teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in the teaching of phonics. The few pupils who struggle to read are given very effective support and this usually leads to rapid improvements.
- At the end of Key Stage 1, standards reached since the previous inspection have continued to rise. In 2014, all pupils reached at least the expected levels. The proportion reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics was well above the national average.
- Assessment and test results at the end of Key Stage 2 tend to vary because they are dependent on the attainment of small groups of pupils. These small cohorts often include pupils who have started school at times other than expected and who have not benefited, therefore, from the good start in the Reception Year.
- Published data can be deceiving because in 2014, more than a third of pupils joined during Key Stage 2. The proportion reaching the expected levels was broadly in line with the national average in mathematics and writing and higher in reading. With the headteacher's drive on improving the quality of teaching, there has been rapid progress, with most current Year 6 pupils working at least at the expected level across all subjects. Whatever their starting points, the vast majority of pupils are making good progress.
- In 2014, pupils' achievement in spelling, punctuation and grammar tests was slightly lower than the national average. The school has adapted the curriculum to improve these areas but there are nevertheless frequent spelling errors in pupils' work. When they speak, pupils sometimes use incorrect grammar and this is reflected in their writing.
- Most pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs make good progress. This is because their additional needs are identified early and are fully met through one-to-one and small-group sessions, delivered by highly skilled teaching assistants. Very strong links with external agencies also support both academic and personal needs of individual pupils and their families.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively and is directed towards supporting the few disadvantaged pupils. This ensures that they make equally good progress as other pupils nationally. The number of disadvantaged pupils in each year group is too small to compare meaningfully the standards they reach with others nationally or in the school. However, inspection evidence shows that as pupils move through the school, gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils are closing.
- Those who join the school other than at the usual times make the same good progress as other pupils.
- The most able pupils make good progress. For example, in the last two years, there have been pupils working at levels normally associated with Key Stage 3 in mathematics. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments and excel in sport, participating in several inter-school competitions.

The early years provision

is good

- Children settle extremely well in the early years because of excellent links between school, home and nurseries. During the inspection, pre-school children took part in a 'Big School Adventure' when they attended early years for an afternoon. Early years children were given the role of buddies for specific children who were visiting and this ensured a smooth and happy start to the session. The buddies paid a great deal of attention to ensuring the younger children played safely by, for example, guiding them on how to keep the sand in the pit so that no one slipped. They also explained the need to be patient and take turns when using the limited number of tricycles. This ensured a harmonious and safe environment.
- Children learn to adopt very good manners towards each other and the adults around them. They automatically say please and thank you when sharing and when older pupils hold doors open for them. They behave extremely well in lessons and during breaks. Children make very good progress in self-confidence, self-awareness, and health and self-care.
- As a result of good leadership, teaching and thoughtfully planned activities, children get really involved in their learning. For example, as part of their topic on the seaside, children listened carefully to the story read by the teacher and then used their imagination to describe what they might see, hear and do at the seaside. This helped to broaden their vocabulary. When they then had free choice of activities, some children chose to play in the ice-cream parlour. Here they took different roles as they bought and sold ice-

cream cones. Although this developed their speech and language skills, there was a missed opportunity to build on the numeracy work they had been doing earlier. At times, when pupils choose their own activities in early years, there are not always enough opportunities to reinforce their numeracy and literacy skills.

- Communication between school and home is strong. Staff are available at the start and end of the school day so that everyone can share relevant information with each other. Parents are kept well informed of the progress their children are making through records known as learning journeys. These are used by staff and most parents to record each child's achievements throughout their time in early years both in school and at home. Such records help staff to plan challenging activities to ensure children build on their experiences and make good progress.
- Children's individual starting points vary from year to year in sometimes very small cohorts. Whatever their starting points, they achieve well. By the end of the Reception Year, the majority of children reach a good level of development and are well prepared for the work that they will meet in Year 1. In 2014, the proportion reaching a good level of development was higher than the national average.

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	119634
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	461732

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	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gerard Oakes
Headteacher	Arran Brogden
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2012
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