

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Crewe

Danebank Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 8AD

## Inspection dates

3–4 June 2014

|                                |                      |             |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Good        | 2        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Good</b> | <b>2</b> |
| 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 and are achieving well in almost all subjects and year groups.
- Teaching is good, and sometimes it is so good it inspires in pupils a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite, friendly and confident young people who work hard and want to do well.
- Pupils feel safe in school. The school looks after them exceptionally well, and teaches them how to stay safe.
- Pupils who are in the early stages of learning English are well supported so they make very rapid progress.
- The school is a very harmonious community where pupils from different backgrounds get on very well together.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, carefully check the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils are making. As a result, teaching and pupils' achievement are both good, and the school is set to improve even further.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) across a range of subjects.
- The progress of some pupils in mathematics, particularly the most able, slows in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils do not have many chances to use and apply their mathematical skills in practical situations, to think logically, or to solve mathematical problems.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons or parts of lessons, and made a number of shorter observations of pupils' learning. They attended an assembly, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read. They spoke to pupils informally about their views of the school, and observed them at play and during lunch breaks.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils and with staff, school leaders and governors. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority and with the school's improvement advisor.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents at the start of each day of the inspection. They looked at the 63 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and at the results of the school's own larger recent survey of parents' views. They also considered the 45 staff questionnaires that they received.
- Inspectors looked at documents including: the school's own review of its strengths and weaknesses; its plans for improvement; records of the quality of teaching; school information on the progress of pupils; and nationally published results. Inspectors also looked at records of pupils' attendance and behaviour, and at how well the school keeps pupils safe.

## Inspection team

Michael Phipps, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Julia Foulger

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Around a third of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is higher than average. Most of these are from Polish families, or from other White European backgrounds, with small numbers of pupils from a range of other ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Around a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than average. (The pupil premium is the additional funding for pupils who are 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 who have special educational needs supported through school action is at national average levels. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs 'SMART Club', a breakfast club and after-school club on the school site. It is managed by the governing body, so it was included in this inspection.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) across a range of subjects.
- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2, by making sure that:
  - the most able pupils are consistently given work which is difficult enough to make them think hard
  - pupils have more chances to use and apply their mathematical skills, to think logically and to solve mathematical problems.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

**is good**

- Pupils make good progress in almost all subjects and year groups. Children join the school with skills well below those typically seen at their age. Current Year 6 pupils are on course to reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014.
- Checks of work in pupils' books carried out by inspectors confirm that pupils are currently making good progress in all subjects and key stages.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage from low starting points. They make rapid progress and begin to catch up well.
- This good progress continues in Key Stage 1. Pupils reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are similar to or above national average levels.
- Pupils have a good understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make), and can sound out unfamiliar words. Their achievement was broadly average in the Year 1 screening phonics check in 2013. Pupils enjoy reading, and read widely and regularly. Older pupils talk with enthusiasm about favourite books and authors.
- Pupils' writing skills develop well because the school provides them with many opportunities to write at length in different subjects and in different styles.
- The mathematical skills of pupils develop well, especially their calculation skills. Their ability to use and apply their knowledge to solve mathematical problems is less well developed as they move up the classes in Key Stage 2.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. They receive good support which meets their individual needs, so they make the same good progress as their classmates.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium in Year 6 in 2013 were around half a term behind their classmates in mathematics and reading, and around a term behind in writing. This is much better than this group achieves nationally. School leaders check their progress closely to make sure any gaps in achievement are closing rapidly. Funds from the pupil premium have been spent on a learning mentor, on a range of programmes to support pupils' skills in English and mathematics, and on subsidising places on residential visits and in the after-school club. This enables eligible pupils to achieve well across the school.
- The increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported so they make rapid progress and achieve well.
- Most able pupils make good progress because tasks are set in lessons which provide them with an appropriate level of challenge. Fewer pupils reached the higher levels in mathematics in 2013, but the proportion of pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6 on course to reach the highest levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014 is at or above national average levels.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2, especially in writing. Pupils' progress in mathematics dipped in 2013 because of some slower progress in the upper years of Key Stage 2. School leaders are clear on the reasons for this, and have taken effective steps to ensure this will not be repeated.

### The quality of teaching

**is good**

- Teaching is consistently good across the school and sometimes it is so good it inspires and stimulates the pupils to learn at a very fast rate. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent, and help to make learning enjoyable.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are clear on their targets and on what they have to do to achieve them. This is because the school has effective systems to ensure this. For example, pupils have individual targets for their writing recorded on a bookmark in their exercise books. This means they can check their writing against

their targets so they can produce their best work.

- Pupils who need extra help are very effectively supported by skilled teaching assistants, both in classrooms and in extra sessions to help them catch up. For example, in a number of one-to-one sessions seen by an inspector, high quality adult-child relationships, effective questioning and careful planning meant pupils made good progress.
- Teachers' marking is detailed and provides pupils with clear guidance on how they can improve their work. Pupils are encouraged to respond to teachers' marking using a different coloured pen, which is beginning to create a useful dialogue between teachers and pupils about their learning.
- Although teachers often plan engaging activities and use a range of good resources, there are occasions when opportunities to use ICT to promote learning and understanding are missed. As a result, pupils' skills in ICT do not move on as quickly as they might, and the use of a powerful tool to interest and engage all pupils is missed.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are polite, friendly and confident. They listen considerately to adults and treat each other with respect.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. Relationships between adults and children are excellent, so pupils enjoy school, work hard and want to do well. However, occasionally pupils' attention wanders when teaching is not so engaging.
- The behaviour of pupils is consistently managed. Pupils can explain the effective system of rewards and sanctions. They enjoy the rewards they get for working hard and behaving well.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding, a view shared strongly by pupils and parents. Policies and procedures to keep pupils safe are exemplary, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is very rare. School records confirm this. Pupils are taught about different types of bullying, such as cyber-bullying. They say that if bullying did take place, it would stop if they told an adult. Pupils are taught to stay safe, and understand potential dangers such as when using the internet.
- Racism is almost unknown. Pupils from different backgrounds get on very well together. There have been no exclusions from school for a number of years.
- The childcare provided by the 'SMART Club' before and after school is of high quality. Children are safe and cared for well. Communication between the school and the club is very effective. The club shares many policies with the school, such as on safeguarding and behaviour. Many of the club's staff also work in the school, so they know children well. The club's facilities and the range of activities for children to enjoy are good.
- Pupils' attendance is generally higher than average. It fell in 2013, but as a result of effective action taken by school leaders, it is now above average levels again.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher has a clear vision of what she wants for pupils. She has high expectations for pupils and staff. Her purposeful and determined leadership means the school continues to improve, and any problems are addressed robustly and effectively.
- The headteacher is well supported by an effective leadership team made up of teachers with responsibility for subjects, year groups and other aspects of the school's work.
- School leaders at all levels regularly check the quality of teaching, planning and marking. Systems for managing teachers' performance are robust. Teachers' targets are based on pupils' progress and are linked to salary progression. Any underperformance in teaching is tackled effectively.
- School leaders regularly check the progress made by pupils. Teachers are held to account for pupils' progress. Any pupils falling behind quickly receive effective help to catch up.

- The primary school sport funding provides sports coaches who work alongside school staff to develop their skills in planning and teaching physical education lessons. It also provides lunchtime sports clubs, aimed particularly at those pupils who were previously relatively inactive. As a result, all pupils now take part in one or more sports clubs.
- The school's well-planned range of subjects and activities provides pupils with interesting lessons and experiences. However, planning for pupils to use ICT and mathematics in other subjects is not as well thought out as it is for writing. A wide range of clubs, visits and visitors considerably enhances pupils' experiences and develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness very well.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively. Every pupil in this large school is known and valued as an individual, and staff are committed to ensuring that every child reaches his or her full potential.
- The local authority rightly has confidence in the leadership of the school, so it provides the school with an appropriately light level of support.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and have good plans for improvement which focus on the right areas. The school is well placed to improve further.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are ambitious for the school, and seek out first-hand evidence of the school's work. For example, they have carried out a series of visits to mathematics lessons to see the impact of a new initiative. Governors are linked to subjects, and some governors attend meetings of the school council. In this way, governors are knowledgeable about how pupils are performing and the quality of teaching, and they have seen the impact of the pupil premium spending at close quarters. They are aware of how teachers' salary progression is determined by the progress that pupils make, and they know how any underperformance in teaching is tackled. Recent training means that governors have a good understanding of what the data on pupils' performance suggests about how well the school is doing compared to other schools nationally. Minutes of meetings of the governing body show that governors ask searching questions to hold school leaders to account. They oversee the school's budget well, and ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet 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

|                                |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 111342        |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Cheshire East |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 444163        |

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

|                                            |                                 |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                         |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary aided                 |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–11                            |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                           |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 584                             |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body              |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | D Baldwin                       |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | S Fau-Goodwin                   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 21 June 2011                    |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01270 685174                    |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | Not applicable                  |
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