

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Stanier Street, Newcastle, Staffordshire ST5 2SU

## Inspection dates

24–25 January 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher and deputy are very well respected by pupils, parents and staff. They have worked hard to create a popular and effective school.
- Leadership at all levels has been strengthened through partnership across the multi-academy company. Teachers new to the school are well supported.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school in detail. They provide an effective balance of challenge and support.
- The school spends additional money for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities wisely. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- Staff and governors are vigilant in maintaining pupils' safety and welfare. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, including when using the internet.
- Pupils are not learning phonics as quickly as pupils in most schools. Pupils' progress in reading and comprehension is not as rapid as their progress in mathematics because teaching in these areas is not as effective.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall and ensure that pupils make rapid progress. However, sometimes teachers do not encourage pupils sufficiently to become independent in their learning or have high enough expectations about handwriting and presentation.
- Parents are very positive about how staff create a safe and happy environment for their children.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. They are polite, well-mannered and value their education. They get on extremely well together and are very proud of their school.
- The high-quality curriculum gives pupils a broad range of experiences across many subjects. As a result, pupils leave well-equipped for the demands of secondary school.
- The early years prepares children well for the next stage of their education, including those who join the school from low starting points.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are strengths of the school. Pupils receive excellent care and individualised support, which helps them feel secure.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that progress in reading is as fast as in mathematics by:
  - improving the relatively weaker areas of phonics teaching so that all pupils are able to use their phonic skills effectively in their reading
  - ensuring that teachers consistently challenge their pupils to understand and question what they are reading in order to deepen their comprehension skills
  - improving how records of pupils' progress in reading are logged so that these inform teachers better about the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching further by:
  - making sure that pupils in all classes, including children in the early years provision, have more opportunities to think for themselves, make their own choices and be more independent learners
  - insisting that pupils use neat handwriting and good presentation across the curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead with vision and clarity of purpose. Their trusting approach has enabled middle leaders to embrace their leadership roles while also nurturing and developing their individual talents. The result is a happy school where pupils thrive and where staff are valued.
- Leaders acknowledge the invaluable support they have received from the multi-academy company. They make good use of the wide expertise available to them.
- Leaders at all levels are clear about their roles and what needs to improve. They effectively check teaching by observing in lessons, looking at pupils' work and monitoring teachers' planning. This ensures that the quality of teaching improves, because leaders are able to identify areas to develop quickly and can intervene appropriately to help teachers improve their practice. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- Leaders use an array of information to hold staff to account for the achievement of pupils. This information also supports leaders to ensure that staff share their good practice and plan for learning together. Consequently, most teaching is good across the curriculum.
- Pupils access a broad curriculum. Pupils learn about science, art, music, religious education, geography and much more in an interesting and engaging way. Displays around the school exhibit pupils' achievements while studying artists such as Miro, Van Gogh, Clarice Cliff, and a range of interesting and varied topics such as investigating features of their local area and Shakespeare.
- Pupils benefit very well from a range of extra-curricular provision that contributes to their learning experience, such as drama, choir, recorder groups, football and netball.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have lots of opportunities to enrich their education. For example, pupils said that the Year 6 residential trip to Laches Wood helped them learn to cooperate with each other and build new friendships. Music and singing play a large part in the school's life. Pupils participate enthusiastically in making music and singing in special events at school and in the local community. Pupils sing in tune and in harmony using three parts with good tonal quality.
- Leaders successfully use pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils through additional learning programmes and strategies to improve pupils' well-being and engagement in their learning. As a result, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is good and improving.
- Leaders are ambitious to raise pupils' achievement further. However, strategies to develop pupils' reading and comprehension skills have not yet been fully successful. Presentation of work and pupils' handwriting are also not yet consistently good.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is spent very well. Specialist teachers have been brought in to deliver high-quality physical education lessons. Additionally, pupils have benefited from access to a wide variety of after-school clubs, competitive events and special activities. As a result, increasingly more pupils

participate in a wider range of sports, such as archery, tri-golf and table tennis.

- Pupils' rates of progress are improving across the school, but not as rapidly in reading as in writing and mathematics. Compared with national figures, a smaller proportion of pupils have been successful at reaching the required standard in the phonics screening check in key stage 1.
- The special educational needs coordinator works closely with teachers to ensure that resources, activities and the environment are supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, enabling them to make good progress. Home-school links are strong and supported effectively by a family support worker. Celebrations in learning are shared and parents are supported in how to help their child at home, enabling pupils to make better progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Leaders have created a strong culture of inclusion which ensures that pupils learn to value individuality and to consider the needs of others. Pupils feel that their views are important and learn that they can have real influence on decisions about how the school can improve. This helps them understand modern British values.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors are passionate about their role in school improvement. They have an excellent knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively, including those related to safeguarding. They possess a wide range of skills that enable them to interpret information about pupils' outcomes accurately and with insight. They ask questions that probe and challenge school leaders well.
- Governors monitor that the extra funding the school receives, such as pupil premium funding, special educational needs funding and primary sports fund, is used effectively. They know that pupils' outcomes in physical education are good and that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is rising.
- A sense of trust and mutual confidence exists between the governing board and the multi-academy company. Governors fully value the benefits of expertise and support in leadership and teaching and learning that the trust brings, while retaining the school's own identity.
- Governors fulfil a supportive role in sustaining close links with parents, the church and the local community to widen pupils' learning experiences.
- Governors are diligent and effective in holding senior leaders to account for the progress that pupils make.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school and that all adults take responsibility for this.
- Records of checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils meet all requirements.
- Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and fully informed about the latest guidance for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being in areas such as child protection and e-

safety. Staff are effective role models. Pupils follow their example in the way they talk, act and treat each other.

- At playtimes and lunchtimes, there is a good level of supervision. The site appears safe and well maintained.
- Vulnerable children are well supported and record-keeping is good.
- Pupils feel safe at St Mary's Catholic Primary School and their parents agree. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and in the wider community.
- There is strong support to help families, including close work with other agencies when appropriate.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Pupils' work in books, assessment information about their progress and performance records and observations of teaching show that the teaching is typically good. Consequently, over time, most pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Pupils said that they enjoy their learning because their teachers plan interesting lessons that challenge them across the curriculum. For example, pupils told inspectors how they have enjoyed special days when mathematics is taught through PE and how they are learning to speak French and create their own computer games.
- The teaching of mathematics across the school is particularly effective. Teachers use a range of resources to provide pupils with explicit models to support their learning. Because of this, pupils can relate and apply what they have learned in a variety of contexts. This deepens pupils' understanding.
- Assessment information is used well to plan lessons and target gaps or misunderstanding in pupils' learning, making sure that pupils do not fall behind. This has been more successful in mathematics and writing than in reading, however, where there is scope for the middle-ability and most-able pupils to make faster progress.
- Teachers question pupils well so they have to do far more than answer with a single word. This deepens their understanding and makes them think deeply. When pupils struggle to answer, teachers gently prompt them while not giving away the answer.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with pupils. They also have good behaviour management strategies, which result in pupils being fully engaged in their work and having positive attitudes to learning.
- Phonics teaching is not always taught with precision, resulting in a smaller proportion of pupils achieving the required standard than is found nationally by the end of Year 1.
- Music is taught very effectively as pupils learn to play instruments and sing to a good standard.
- Pupils apply their writing skills through well-considered activities across the curriculum. Examples of cross-curricular writing include history, geography, science and religious education. As a result, pupils are developing a better understanding of how to write for different audiences and reasons.
- Teaching and learning in science is a strength of the school. Overall, national

assessment results in 2016 in science confirmed this.

- While teaching is typically good, leaders acknowledge that there is still some less-effective teaching in the school. In these lessons, teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to think and explore challenges independently.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff and governors are successful in ensuring that the school provides a safe and nurturing environment in which pupils can flourish and succeed. As a result, pupils are friendly, thoughtful and respectful.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and secure in school. They said that bullying, when it does occasionally happen, is dealt with quickly by staff. All pupils said that they would feel safe confiding in an adult in school.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe in a variety of situations. Discussions with pupils demonstrated how well they know how to keep safe, including using the internet.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of enrichment activities that are on offer. They understand the importance of keeping healthy and how fitness can contribute to their overall well-being. Participation in sports events has increased and pupils enjoy competitive activities.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of healthy eating at lunchtimes. One pupil commented, 'My vegetables are healthy and even my pudding has peaches in it.'
- Pupils enjoy taking on active roles in the school. Typically, pupils wear their uniform with pride, with badges sewn onto their sleeves to denote special responsibilities, for example related to gardening and the school council.
- A daily children's club provides a calm and welcoming start to the day.
- The overwhelming majority of staff and parents who completed online questionnaires during the inspection agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for at this school. One parent said, 'St Mary's is like one big family where nothing is too much trouble.'

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is very good.
- In class, pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning. They listen well and understand that they are expected to get on with their work. Pupils maintain good levels of concentration when working, either on their own or in small groups or pairs. They talk sensibly about their ideas and listen to each other respectfully.
- Pupils are polite, respectful to visitors and behave well. Examination of behaviour records and discussions with pupils confirm that this is typically the case over time.
- Pupils move very calmly around the school building, for example into assembly and between lessons, and settle quickly to a new activity. Lunchtimes are calm and well organised, as is behaviour in the canteen.

- Pupils respect their learning environment. Displays are well maintained, stimulating and attractive.
- There is clear evidence of mutual respect between staff and pupils. Similarly, pupils demonstrate care and consideration towards their peers.
- Attendance has remained in line with national averages in recent years. Persistent absenteeism for some groups of pupils has been higher than the national figure. Leaders are working successfully to address this with the support of the local authority.
- Leaders have been firm in their expectations of pupils attending school regularly and on time. Any lateness is quickly followed up and punctuality has improved.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Good

- Pupils are making good progress in most subjects, especially given their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. This was confirmed by work viewed in pupils' books and from the school's own information.
- Leaders check on the performance of specific groups of pupils very closely, particularly where they may be at risk of underperformance. Leaders meet with teachers regularly to ensure that any concerns about pupils' progress are addressed promptly. As a result, current school information shows that all groups of pupils, including the most able, achieve well.
- Children in the early years make good progress from low starting points. By the time they leave Reception, the majority of children are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
- According to the school's own tracking system, supported by evidence seen in workbooks, pupils currently in the school continue to make good progress. Nevertheless, there is a slight legacy of underachievement in some year groups. Senior leaders and governors are well aware of this and have implemented plans to ensure that by the time they leave the school, these pupils will have had the chance to catch up.
- A detailed examination of disadvantaged pupils' exercise books, including the most able disadvantaged, shows that their strong progress matches that of other pupils in the class. There is good evidence that the school has successfully used the pupil premium grant to help them overcome any barriers to learning that they have faced.
- Although key stage 2 pupils' progress in reading was close to that seen nationally in 2016, records that are kept of their reading progress lack the necessary sharpness to enable staff to support them to progress at a fast rate.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make consistently good progress over time from their starting points. This is because the additional support and resources for these pupils is very well managed by the leader responsible for these pupils.
- In 2016, a smaller proportion of Year 1 pupils reached the required standard in the phonics screening check than was found in most schools nationally. However, leaders have implemented strategies to improve the way phonics is now being taught.

- Across a range of subjects, pupils make good progress as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge and high-quality teaching from visiting teachers to the school. Music, art and physical education have a high profile in the school and pupils achieve well in these subjects.
- The majority of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including pupils who speak English as an additional language, benefit from effective support and make the same progress as other pupils.
- The school ensures that pupils are well prepared to move on to secondary education.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Standards by the time children move into Year 1 from Reception are broadly in line with those around the country. Boys' attainment has in recent years lagged behind that of girls, but leaders have addressed the gender difference effectively.
- Adults constantly promote good learning behaviours and develop real-life skills. Children are settled and there are positive relationships between adults and children. Children show a high level of engagement and sustained concentration. This prepares them well for learning in Year 1.
- Children's behaviour is exemplary because adults set high standards. Shouting out and running is very rare. At lunchtime, inspectors were impressed with how well children helped each other and chatted sensibly while eating their meals. These strong behaviours prepare children well for Year 1.
- Adults skilfully engage children with resources and activities, and use questions well to deepen children's understanding and learning. Pupils collaborated well in writing sentences about the contents of a box, helping each other to spell unknown words.
- Teaching assistants model speech well and encourage children to use sentences. They effectively scan the room and intervene to challenge children by subtly altering the task.
- The early years is well managed. Accurate assessments take place to ensure that the next steps in learning are clear for all children to move them on quickly. Those who do not speak English as their first language learn quickly, and are supported well by adults.
- Parents consider the staff in the early years to be very approachable and there is good communication between home and school.
- The physical environment, including the outdoors, is well organised. It motivates children because it is lively, thought-provoking and stimulating. Children are well directed and supported by adults, although children do not always have enough opportunities to learn independently.
- The provision for nursery children is safe and well resourced. Teachers understand the needs of individual children well and plan effective opportunities for their early learning, involving their parents fully in this process. The setting is steeped in vibrant examples of children's work, which demonstrates how quickly they settle in and make good progress. 'I'm making icicles,' said one child as he enthusiastically explored how



liquid dripped from a pipette.

- Children are safe and well cared for. Staff ensure that all welfare requirements are met.

## School details

|                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Unique reference number | 140803        |
| Local authority         | Staffordshire |
| Inspection number       | 10025152      |

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

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Type of school                      | Primary  |
| School category                     | Academy  |
| Age range of pupils                 | 3 to 11  |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 417  |
| Appropriate authority               | The governing body   |
| Chair                               | Ellen Wainwright   |
| Headteacher                         | Bernadette Sims  |
| Telephone number                    | 01782 619685   |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.st-marys-newcastle.staffs.sch.uk">www.st-marys-newcastle.staffs.sch.uk</a> |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:headteacher@stmarysnul.co.uk">headteacher@stmarysnul.co.uk</a>                 |
| Date of previous inspection         | Not previously inspected   |

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- This was the first inspection since the school converted to academy status in April 2014. The school is part of the Christ the King Catholic Collegiate multi-academy company.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. Those from minority ethnic backgrounds represent a larger proportion of pupils than that seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who require special educational needs support is below the

national average.

- The number of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school runs a children's club before and after school.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum standards for achievement and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in parts of 24 lessons, three of which were jointly observed with leaders. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to lessons as part of learning walks throughout the school.
- Inspectors observed other aspects of the school day, including before and after school provision, small-group sessions, lesson changeovers, breaktimes, lunchtimes, after-school clubs and the start and the end of the school day.
- Various discussions were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, pupils and children, parents, a newly qualified teacher, members of the governing body and a representative of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including: assessments and records of pupils' progress; the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance; external reports; minutes of governing body meetings; the school's self-evaluation information; and the school's improvement plans.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading, looked at pupils' books and scrutinised the school's information showing pupils' progress and attainment. Inspectors also scrutinised books belonging to specific groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- The views of pupils and children were gathered by inspectors speaking to them in lessons, at breaktimes and in small-group meetings.
- The views of parents were gathered from 27 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Inspectors analysed responses to survey questionnaires from 31 members of staff and 20 pupils.

## Inspection team

|                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Alan Prince, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Jan Baker                   | Ofsted Inspector |
| Sarah Ashley                | Ofsted Inspector |

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