

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Farmfield Drive, Beechwood, Prenton, Merseyside, CH43 7TE

Inspection dates 17–18 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Since the last inspection, pupils' achievement has risen. From their starting points, pupils now make good progress and achieve well so that when they leave the school they reach standards that are broadly in-line with those expected for their age.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding often achieve better than similar pupils nationally. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because of the good support they receive.
- Feedback to teachers, following lesson observations by senior leaders and good training have raised the quality of teaching so that it is now good.
- Pupils typically behave well. They are courteous and respectful. Occasional misdemeanours are dealt with effectively by staff. Attendance has improved since the last inspection.
- Determined leadership by the headteacher has built an effective staff team who share her ambition to improve the school further.
- Seniors leaders make effective checks on how well the school is doing and there are good plans for further improvement. The use of data about the progress pupils make is excellent and ensures no one falls behind.
- Governors are well informed and ask searching questions to ensure pupils are achieving well. They ensure that pupils are kept safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is still a little teaching that requires improvement and not enough is outstanding.
- There is a little inconsistency in setting learning steps for different groups of pupils in lessons and in the marking of pupils' work.
- Occasionally, opportunities are missed to get pupils to think as hard as they can.
- Checks of the quality of teaching and data from parental surveys could be better used to help senior leaders and the governing body improve the school still further.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons, taught by six teachers. Two of the observations were jointly undertaken with the headteacher and deputy headteacher respectively. In addition, the inspector made short visits to small group teaching activities.
- The inspector listened to pupils read from Years 2, 3 and 6. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, members of staff and a representative from the local authority.
- The very small number of responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) meant that the results were not available to the inspector. However, the inspector took account of the school's December 2012 survey of parents' views and a letter from a parent. The 15 staff questionnaire returns were also analysed.
- The work of the school was observed and a number of documents were looked at including records of the checks it makes on how well it is doing, development plans, monitoring records, data about pupils' attainment and progress and information relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Eric Craven, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school. It is housed in a one-storey building in the Centre of the Beechwood Estate in Prenton.
- In most classes there is a mix of year groups. The vast majority of pupils are White British and no pupil speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection there have been considerable staff changes including a new senior leadership team. The area used for the Early Years Foundation Stage pupils has been remodelled.
- The government provides extra funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority or who are children of families in the services, through the pupil premium. The proportion of pupils eligible to be supported by the pupil premium in this school is well above average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to further raise pupils' achievement, improve the quality of teaching so that none requires improvement and more is outstanding by:
 - making sure planning consistently includes learning steps for different groups of pupils so that work can be more closely matched to their needs
 - taking every opportunity to challenge pupils to think as hard as they can
 - ensuring that marking of pupils' work is entirely consistent across the school.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management further by:
 - analysing data from lesson observations for patterns and trends, sharing the findings with the governing body and setting further targets in the school development plan to improve the proportion of outstanding teaching
 - making more use of recent parent questionnaire returns to check how well the school is doing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When they join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage children have skills that are typically well below those expected for their age. They settle well, make good use of the high quality indoor and outdoor resources and enjoy their time at school. Children learn to listen well and are given lots of opportunities to practice their speaking skills. They move on at a pace, particularly in the Reception Year because of good teaching. They know the school's routines and are well prepared for moving into Year 1.
- This secure start is built on successfully. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils now make good progress and achieve well from their different starting points.
- Over the last few years attainment at the end of Year 2 has risen and is just a little below average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2012, results at the end of Year 6 were a little above average in English but below average in mathematics, a dip from 2011. The school's response has been very purposeful and the data and inspection evidence show that pupils' progress has accelerated and mathematics results are justifiably predicted to rise. The daily practising of mental mathematics is reaping rewards.
- Reading is well taught and pupils make good progress. They get frequent opportunities to read. They have learned to 'sound out' tricky words. Those who met with the inspector read aloud confidently and said they read at home. The school's data show that many more pupils are predicted to reach the expected standard in the national check on their skills in phonics (the sounds that letters make) this year than in 2012.
- The progress made by different groups of pupils over the last few years has most often been good. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similarly good progress to most other pupils in the school, particularly in reading and writing, because of good support they are given in lessons. Pupil premium funding is used effectively. Extra staffing has been provided to allow specific support for groups of pupils and eligible pupils do well because of it. There are, in the main, no gaps between the overall achievement of these pupils and others in the school and across the country; indeed they often achieve better. All groups of pupils get on well together and they understand why some receive additional support. The school promotes equality of opportunity well.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is good. Parents who responded to the school's survey agree that their children are taught well.
- Teachers are now using data much more to plan for pupils' needs and to set in place additional support for those in danger of falling behind. This effective extra support is provided by part-time teachers and trained teaching assistants; it helps these pupils catch-up and plugs gaps in their learning. A good example of this is a 10-week programme of mathematics support for two small groups of pupils that has accelerated the progress of every pupil in a short period of time.
- Teachers know the pupils well and there are good relationships in lessons. Almost always pupils are captured by the interesting and relevant activities they are given. A good mathematics lesson, for example, had pupils designing a zoo as they learned important mathematics concepts such as ratio.
- The marking of pupils work has much improved. Although still a little inconsistent, at its best it informs pupils well about how they are doing and helps them improve their work.
- Teachers prepare lessons well. Readily available resources help sustain a suitably swift pace in most lessons. In the best lessons, planning of learning steps with degrees of difficulty for different groups of pupils is good. However, this is not always the case. In some lessons these learning steps are too general and not made specific enough to best suit some pupils'

abilities.

- Teachers get pupils to collaborate well. They gain from the frequent opportunities they have to work hand-in-hand with a partner.
- Teachers' questioning to check on pupils' understanding is good but sometimes pupils are not challenged to think hard enough. On these occasions, teachers do not entice extended answers from pupils or ask supplementary questions to help them deepen their understanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- In lessons pupils behave well and are respectful. Around the school they are polite and well mannered. Pupils show they can concentrate and most listen well.
- The school's data show that behaviour over time is typically good. There have been no exclusions or racial incidents since the previous inspection. The records of incidents show these are infrequent and are effectively managed. Nevertheless, the school is not making the best use of the data stemming from these incident records to check for any patterns or changes and to report these to the governing body.
- Pupils value the rewards they can achieve. Pupils who have behaviour difficulties, sometimes associated with communication problems, are well managed by staff that know them well. The school's survey of parents shows that almost all parents feel the school deals effectively with inappropriate behaviour.
- The pupils who met with the inspector say that they feel safe and secure and have someone to turn to if they have a worry. They say there is little bullying but what there is tends to be name-calling, which they say staff deal with swiftly.
- The school is vigilant in vetting new staff and governors keep a watchful eye to make sure the way pupils are safeguarded is secure. Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves as safe as possible. They appreciate the ethos of the school is helping them show concern for others. Pupils with physical and sensory disabilities are well provided for in school and get on well with other pupils.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection because of the school's rigorous actions to check on absence and to deal with attendance problems. It has worked effectively with the local authority's education welfare service. The school has sensibly taken a firm stance in not authorising holidays in term time.

The leadership and management

are good

- In the two years following the previous inspection there was considerable staffing changes. Staffing is now much more stable and the school has strong and successful leadership. Staff who returned the Ofsted questionnaire were unanimous in saying the school is well led and managed and they know what the school is trying to achieve. Staff are proud to work in the school, know what is expected of them and share senior leaders' views of how successful the school can be.
- Working in harmony with the headteacher, leaders of English, mathematics and the Early Years Foundations Stage are leading their areas very well. They are outward looking and influential. They marry rigorous checking of performance with good support and guidance for their colleagues to help them improve their skills.
- The use of data about the progress pupils make is excellent. Senior staff compare the progress of different groups of pupils, over time and in different subjects. The different types of additional support provided for pupils are checked carefully to make sure they are successfully accelerating pupils' progress and raising their achievement.
- Senior staff have a largely correct view of the school because they check closely how

effective it is. Nevertheless, more use could be made of the information from the checks of the quality of teaching to see more precisely how teaching is changing over time. This information can be shared with governors and used to set additional targets in the school development plan to increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding.

- Although the views of parents are sought, the school does not routinely use the information well enough as part of the checks it makes on how well it is doing.
- The quality of teaching has improved because senior staff give helpful feedback to teachers to help them improve further. Training has also been used well to improve teaching skills.
- The organisation of the performance management of teachers is good. Teachers are being held to account for the progress their pupils make. No teachers have been promoted when the quality of teaching has not been good enough.
- Changes to the curriculum have made it more relevant and provide lots of interesting experiences for the pupils. They have benefitted from this. For example, a group of pupils recently commenced the first lesson in a project on 'Fairtrade' and mathematics at a local supermarket.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good understanding of the needs of others. Pupils are treated equally and fairly and staff are vigilant to ensure there is no discrimination. All of the parents in the school's own survey said their children are treated fairly.
- The local authority has supported the school well since the last inspection. It has responded appropriately as the school has improved and has plans to dilute its support because the school has strengthened further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are performing their roles well. Governors keep a close check on how the school is doing through the reports they receive, visits they make and the questions they ask. They are fully aware of how the school has improved. The governing body is not afraid to pose searching questions and hold senior staff and themselves to account. Although governors have a helpful understanding of the school's data about pupils' progress which helps them ask these telling questions, they could helpfully receive more information about the quality of teaching. Governors are aware of teachers' performance management and the link between pay and performance. They have a good appreciation of how pupil premium money is being spent and the positive difference it is making to this group of pupils.

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	105070
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	400753

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	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian O'Connell
Headteacher	Christine Fenna
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2009
Telephone number	0151 652 7828
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