

# Inspection of St Mark's Catholic Primary School

Fir Avenue, Halewood, Liverpool, Merseyside L26 0XR

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Inspection dates: 17–18 September 2019

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous  
inspection Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils feel safe and happy in school. They told us that the school looks after them well. Pupils trust the staff to sort out any problems that they might have. They say that there is little or no bullying. The many pupils we spoke to agreed that teachers do their absolute best to sort things out if pupils fall out with each other. St Mark's is a friendly community. Pupils have fun because teachers make lessons interesting and they enjoy each other's company. Pupils know that the school wants them to be as successful as possible. Pupils say that teachers always help them if they are struggling with their work. Behaviour is good. This means that everyone can concentrate and learn in lessons. Pupils enjoy playing together at breaks and lunchtimes. They enjoy the many trips and visits that teachers plan to make different subjects more interesting. They take part in many sporting activities and enjoy craftwork. Pupils are proud to attend this school. Parents and carers feel welcome in school. Staff make sure that parents know how they can support their children's learning.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders want every pupil to have a really strong start to their education so that they can get the best out of secondary school later. Teachers work hard to make sure that all the pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have a good education.

This starts with making sure that every pupil can read and write well and has a wide vocabulary. Staff read lots of books with pupils. They give pupils plenty of practice in reading aloud fluently. They want all pupils to be confident when they speak. In mathematics, teachers make sure that pupils build on their earlier learning. Work in pupils' books shows that they remember and become fluent in areas such as number bonds. However, there is not a strong enough link between what children have learned in the early years and new work in key stage 1.

Leaders have been working for some time to make sure that pupils get a good deal in every subject. This is already the case in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has improved the way pupils learn about history and geography. For example, instead of teaching a series of different events from history, teachers now build on earlier learning, regularly revisiting topics and helping pupils to understand the chronology of history. Leaders are now working on making similar improvements in other subjects, such as music, art and computing. They have made an excellent start on reshaping the curriculum but need more time to complete the changes.

Teachers know their subjects well and are enthusiastic. This makes learning lively and interesting. The school is developing a new way of checking on pupils' work. The purpose is to help pupils to remember more and build up strong knowledge and understanding in different subjects.

Pupils and teachers get on well with each other. Pupils concentrate and listen to their teachers and to each other. The work in most books reflects the new emphasis in the curriculum that pupils know and remember more.

Pupils learn about modern Britain and understand what is meant by democracy and the importance of the law. They learn how to keep healthy and fit. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures and faiths.

All the staff in this school have responsibilities for leading in different subjects. Staff feel valued for the contribution that they make to school improvement. Staff and parents speak highly of the senior leaders, who manage the school well. The governors are experienced and keep a very good check on how well pupils are achieving and how well they are looked after.

Children feel safe, happy and excited about learning in the early years. They quickly get used to school. They enjoy working in their bright classroom and outdoor areas. Adults teach children by talking to them, setting interesting tasks and making sure that, as they play, they learn at the same time.

In the Nursery class, children learn about numbers and letters and sounds from the start. They really enjoy story time. During the inspection, the Reception class loved listening to 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' and joining in. Children behave well and are very well looked after. They are ready for work in Year 1 by the time that they reach the end of Reception.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors work hard to make sure that every child is safe in school. All staff have regular training so that they know what signs to look for if a pupil seems unhappy or unwell. The very experienced learning mentor works with children and families who may need extra support. School leaders regularly work with other agencies to make sure that children are safe. The school carries out careful checks on everyone who is employed there or who regularly visits the school. Leaders have made sure that the building is safe and that entrances and exits are secure.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In mathematics, there is not a strong enough link between what children have already learned in the early years and the Year 1 curriculum. This means that teaching does not build well on what pupils already know. Leaders need to ensure that the mathematics curriculum is sequenced more effectively as pupils move from Reception into Year 1.

- Pupils do not have many opportunities to learn about other cultures and world faiths in a way that makes them memorable. Leaders should make sure that the curriculum enables pupils to understand more about the different kinds of people who live in modern Britain and other world faiths.
- The new assessment system helps teachers know how well pupils are learning. It has also been designed to reduce the workload of staff. However, it is still in the early stages. Leaders and teachers need to fully embed this system so that it becomes an even more effective method for checking pupils' understanding and progress.

The transition arrangements have been taken into account during this inspection.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 104469   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council                                      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10110920   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary aided  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3 to 11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 239  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>             | Ann Farrell  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Richard Coakley  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.stmarkshalewood.org.uk">www.stmarkshalewood.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 16 October 2018  |

## Information about this school

- The school runs a daily breakfast club.
- The school sometimes uses alternative provision at Motiv8.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We had discussions with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the leaders for the early years and key stage 1 and several curriculum leaders. We met the chair of governors and two other members of the governing body.
- We held meetings with representatives from the local authority and from the diocese.
- We looked closely at reading, mathematics, history and music. We talked to the subject leaders, visited pupils during lessons, spoke to them about their learning, listened to pupils' reading and looked at the work in their books. Because it is early in the academic year, the inspectors also looked at books from last year. We also considered pupils' work in science and writing.

- We gained the views of parents from the 21 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and from looking at the school’s internal questionnaires. We gained the views of staff from speaking to them and from the 14 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- We examined the school’s processes for safeguarding children. We looked at policies and procedures, checked the school’s central record of staff and spoke to governors and teachers about safeguarding. We also talked to many pupils about how safe they felt in school.

### **Inspection team**

Judith Straw, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Moira Atkins

Ofsted Inspector

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