

Much Woolton Catholic Primary School

Watergate Lane, Woolton, Liverpool, Merseyside L25 8QH

Inspection dates	9–10 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leadership at all levels is outstanding. The school is rapidly improving because leaders and governors have rigorously tackled previous weaknesses.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good or better. Teachers know their pupils well. They assess pupils' work regularly and keep a careful check on the progress they make.
- Outcomes are good and improving. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is outstanding. Progress is good in reading and science and attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is excellent and has resulted in a rapid rise in the number of pupils reaching the expected level so that this is now well above average.
- Pupils work hard, listen to their teachers and take pride in their achievements. They enjoy school and their behaviour is excellent. Pupils feel safe and valued. They have a deep understanding of tolerance and equality and look after each other.
- The outstanding curriculum supports pupils' academic, social, emotional and physical development very effectively.
- Children make a good start to their education in the early years. They enjoy learning in this safe, stimulating and creative environment. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years is similar to the national figure and rising.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Overall the progress that pupils make in writing is not yet as strong as the progress they make in reading and mathematics. Boys are making much slower progress than girls in writing.
- Although teaching is good, it is not yet consistently strong enough to ensure that pupils make sustained and significant progress in all subject areas and all year groups.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that an increased proportion of pupils work at, and above, age-related expectations by:
 - improving the quality of teaching in school by sharing the excellent practice that already exists
 - further accelerating pupils' progress in writing, and particularly that of boys.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher transmits high expectations to staff and pupils alike. His aspirations permeate the school and, under his leadership, the school has improved rapidly since the previous inspection. He is committed to the process of building the leadership skills of all staff and pupils. He is ably supported by the deputy and assistant headteachers.
- Senior leaders have systematically tackled all previous weaknesses. The teaching of mathematics and the progress of pupils in mathematics are now outstanding. There is good progress in the drive to improve writing and particularly that of boys. For example, there are boys' writing clubs at lunchtimes and booster classes. Boy-friendly topics and working alongside visiting authors have helped to raise the profile and importance of writing. Although boys' progress lags behind that of girls, there are clear signs of improvement.
- Middle leaders, appointed since the previous inspection, have played a crucial role in accelerating progress and improving teaching and learning. They are ambitious, have a clear vision for what they want to achieve and are given the time to carefully check on their strategies and measure their impact. They have ensured that there are now regular discussions among staff which are transforming teaching and learning. Middle leaders regularly report on the impact of their work to governors. They rigorously evaluate their own actions and can identify which strategies have been the most successful in bringing about improvement, for example practical work in science and mathematics, meeting professional authors in writing, and bringing in grandparents to give living history talks about their experiences of the Second World War.
- The special educational needs coordinator has done much to raise the profile of teaching assistants and to develop their professional skills. They have their own performance reviews and increasingly play a crucial role in supporting the learning of specific groups of children.
- The leadership and management of pastoral development and welfare are highly effective. The coordinator for health and well-being supports the physical, mental and emotional well-being of all the children. Pastoral care is central to all aspects of the school's provision. The recent appointment of a learning mentor has further enhanced this aspect of the school's work. The coordinator provides training for other schools across the authority.
- Pupil premium funding is spent on extra hours for teaching staff, booster classes, additional staff training, extra resources and subsidies so that pupils can take part in all extra activities including residential visits. The impact of this is seen in improved attendance for these pupils and improved outcomes. There is no gap in achievement for younger pupils and the gap is narrowing at the end of Year 6.
- The curriculum is highly effective, stimulating and wide-ranging. Displays show the quality of work of pupils in all subject areas. A tour of the school revealed: wonderful poems, photographs of science investigations, studies of ancient Orkney, Spanish vocabulary, impressionist paintings and a Greek murder mystery week display. The curriculum and the ethos of the school support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. They are well prepared to become active citizens in modern Britain.
- School leaders are passionate about supporting the health and well-being of pupils and use the sports funding very effectively. All pupils have at least two hours' sporting activity every week and all have the opportunity to take part in outdoor adventure activities and regular exercise. Pupils become safe and competent swimmers. Themed weeks such as 'Olympics', 'walk to school' and 'healthy week' encourage ever-increasing participation. Pupils have taster sessions in more unusual sports such as fencing, and the opportunity to take part in an annual ski-ing trip abroad. Staff act as role models and staff sporting success is celebrated alongside that of pupils. As a result, over one third of all pupils exceed age-related expectations in physical education, and most pupils attend several fitness clubs. The school's excellent work in this area was celebrated in 2015 by a prestigious national award.
- The school has a strong partnership with parents and works hard to keep them informed about their children's progress. School leaders help parents to understand the new assessment systems, new curriculum developments and the strategies used to support reading and writing as well as keeping them informed about how to keep their children safe online.
- The local authority holds the school in high regard and uses the expertise of leaders here to support other schools. For example, the headteacher mentors newly appointed headteachers.

- The duty of safeguarding is taken very seriously. Adults are well trained in all aspects of child protection, including the duty to guard against any form of extremism. Staff are aware of any pupils with specific medical issues and are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are highly competent and clear about their role. They are ambitious for the school to become the best it can be. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and what aspects can be further improved, gained from reports, meetings and their own first-hand experience. They consider reports from all middle leaders on the progress of their areas and future plans for development.
 - Governors provide support and challenge to the school and are rigorous in their examination of pupils' progress, the quality of teaching, the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and whether the school is spending additional funds effectively. They keep a secure hand on the budget, reward good teaching and effectively tackle any underperformance. The governors have a deep understanding of their local community and have many systems for gaining the views of parents.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved rapidly since the previous inspection so that it is now consistently good. Some teaching leads to pupils making outstanding progress. Pupils make excellent progress in mathematics, previously a weakness, and there is improved progress in reading and writing. The teaching of science, history and geography is strong.
- On occasions, teaching enthral pupils and is innovative and exciting. For example, mathematics work is often set in the context of storytelling, such as finding a way to the witch's secret potion by cracking the code. Younger pupils enjoy learning about mathematical shapes in interesting ways.
- The teaching of mathematics is highly effective across the school: 'Every day is a maths day at Much Woolton'. Pupils are taught to see that mathematics is critical to everyday life and to science, technology, finance and employment. The staff aim to inspire a real love of mathematics. Their focus is on deepening understanding and their success is evident in pupils' ability to discuss mathematical concepts. There is also a strong focus on problem-solving and practical mathematical activities. For example, pupils learned about perimeter by measuring the playground and working out relationships from clues on a family tree.
- Teachers put great emphasis on ensuring that pupils edit their work so that it continually improves in accuracy, imagination and effectiveness. They use technology and stimulating resources to bring learning alive and increase pupils' participation and enjoyment. Pupils are well trained to use their word banks and dictionaries as a matter of course.
- Teaching assistants and student teachers effectively support the learning of the less able and most-able pupils so that groups of pupils receive more specific individual attention to accelerate their progress.
- Teachers' marking is helpful to pupils in guiding their next steps and setting new challenges.
- The teaching of writing is now a focus because the school is aware of the need to accelerate progress in this area, particularly for boys. A wealth of initiatives is already making a difference and improving progress. For instance, a visiting author spent time with different classes, helping them to create their own book. Themed weeks inspire pupils: the murder mystery, creative writing week and learning about 'the lonely robot' have captured their imaginations. Teachers' effective planning of interesting writing tasks is leading to pupils making better progress in developing their writing skills.
- The pace of learning usually maintains pupils' interest and tasks are generally clearly presented.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are proud of their school and their own contribution to their good progress and learning. The older pupils are in no doubt that the school has improved significantly since the last inspection. They say that lessons are really interesting, teachers listen to them more, and there is more challenge in their work so that they feel a great sense of achievement when they are successful.

- Pupils are well aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and the hazards associated with inappropriate use of social media. They learn a lot from talks in assembly, including from the NSPCC, and know that prejudice against others because of race, religion or gender is totally unacceptable. Through the personal, social and health curriculum they are well informed about the dangers of drugs, gangs, alcohol and peer pressure.
- Pupils say that they feel entirely safe in school and trust the adults who look after them.
- Older pupils have a strong sense of responsibility and enjoy taking on leadership roles as reading buddies and playground leaders and serving on the school council: 'We always want to be the best, we want to set the standard for the younger ones'.
- Pupils participate in numerous after-school clubs, know how to keep themselves healthy and fit and understand the value of personal relationships.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Nearly all pupils who completed the survey or spoke with inspectors said that they love coming to school.
- Attendance is consistently above average.
- Behaviour in lessons is excellent and at break- and lunchtimes pupils play well together. The playgrounds are well supervised and play leaders make sure that there is plenty going on to entertain pupils.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are very rare because most pupils enjoy school, respect their teachers and enjoy learning. Most parents agree that behaviour is very well managed in school.
- Pupils are proud of their school environment, which is beautifully maintained. There is no litter or graffiti and walls are attractive with some wonderful displays of art work.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Rates of progress made by pupils in writing have been below average in recent years but are now rising.
- Pupils currently in school make excellent progress in mathematics and good progress in reading and science.
- Girls achieve better than boys across classes, especially in writing. The school's assessment information indicates that gaps in performance between girls and boys are reducing.
- Pupils at the end of Year 2 are reaching above-average standards in reading.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics check has increased each year for the last three years and is above average.
- Following the previous inspection, the school has changed the way in which mathematics and writing are taught so that there is stimulating, challenging and exciting work in most year groups. Pupils present their written work well and take pride in their books.
- The small proportion of disadvantaged pupils entitled to pupil premium support make faster progress than others in school. The gap in their achievement when compared with that of other pupils in school is small and narrowing. The gap is even smaller between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others across the country.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress from their starting points because of carefully targeted intervention and support. Their progress is carefully checked by the special needs coordinator and any issues are discussed with parents and the pupils themselves.
- The very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language make excellent progress.
- The most-able pupils are being challenged and stretched by much stronger teaching. In the past, some did not make the progress of which they were capable in reading and writing but this is rapidly improving.
- Younger pupils read accurately and carefully and older pupils read with enthusiasm and fluency. Pupils support each other's development by a whole range of 'reading buddy' partnerships whereby older pupils support younger ones.
- There are many examples of pupils' work across a range of subjects which show good and effective learning, for example an investigation in science on why the moon appears to change shape, and in geography where pupils study the causes and effects of recent flooding in the city of York.

- In 2015, Year 6 pupils achieved significantly above-average outcomes in the spelling, punctuation and grammar test. These good outcomes and above-average standards, combined with pupils' motivation and commitment, mean that they are very well prepared for the next stage of education.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enter Reception class with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. Over the last three years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased and in 2015 was slightly above the national average. This upward trend appears set to continue. Girls' achievement is stronger than that of boys, particularly in early writing.
- Teaching is usually lively and interesting and, when this is the case, children are motivated and keen learners. Relationships between children and adults are good. Activities are often based on children's own suggestions and interests, for example, the Star Wars films and Egyptian pyramids.
- Phonics teaching is a strength of the school. Children get a good grounding in understanding sounds and letters in Reception that helps their early reading skills.
- Children who are identified with learning difficulties are supported effectively with the involvement of outside agencies where necessary.
- Adults regularly check children's learning and progress.
- Children behave well. They develop social skills quickly and get along well with each other. They usually share resources and take turns. Most children respond well to adults and show resilience in completing tasks.
- Children are safe. Adults are well trained and vigilant. Arrangements to help children to move up into Year 1 are effective.
- The school works very hard to ensure that parents are well informed through the learning log and there is a wealth of information on the school website. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning and development and the parents spoken to during the inspection were very positive in their praise of the early years classes.
- The early years leader has rapidly improved the setting. She leads her team with enthusiasm and energy. She has improved the environment, the quality of teaching and assessment and the outcomes for children. She has good plans to improve the outdoor learning environment and further enhance staff development.

School details

Unique reference number	104636
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10002224

This inspection 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	399
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Chapman
Headteacher	Matthew White
Telephone number	0151 4286114
Website	www.muchwoolton.co.uk
Email address	office@muchwoolton.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2013

Information about this school

- Much Woolton is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds, with few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress.
- Many new teachers have been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, including two jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with a group of Year 6 pupils and spoke to many other pupils informally at break- and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors sampled work in pupils' books in all classes and across a range of subjects including English, mathematics and science, and topic work in history, geography and design technology.
- The inspectors listened to pupils reading in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Meetings were held with representatives from the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and senior and middle leaders and the school improvement partner from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documents. These included information relating to safeguarding and child protection, attendance and behaviour, development planning, subject planning, tracking information on pupils' progress, performance management systems and procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The views of staff were gained from their responses to the Ofsted questionnaire and from conversations during the inspection.
- Inspectors gained the views of parents from 124 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, and from meeting parents bringing their children to school and visiting assembly.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Ann-Marie Dimeck	Ofsted Inspector
John Shutt	Ofsted Inspector

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