

# St Silas Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104615
<b>Local authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	377104
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Diane Auton

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	205
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tom Wilson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathan Nichols
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Pengwern Street Liverpool L8 3TP
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Diane Auton  
Prydwen Elfed-Owens

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited nine teachers in their classrooms and observed twelve lessons or part-lessons. The inspectors listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of letters and sounds in Key Stages 1 and 2. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, a group of pupils and a group of parents and carers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, safeguarding and equality policies and minutes of governing body meetings. The inspectors reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 62 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views of pupils in Key Stage 2 and those that staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller in size than most other primary schools. A nursery class was added to the school in September 2010. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs, is also well above average. The school serves a culturally diverse community and most pupils are from minority-ethnic backgrounds, with 38 different home languages currently represented in school. In 2011, the school met the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

A considerably higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual transition points. Some of these pupils are newly arrived in the country and some have not previously attended school.

The headteacher, who was acting headteacher at the time of the school's previous inspection, was appointed in 2009. Since the previous inspection, the school has achieved Dyslexia-Friendly status and the International Schools Award (intermediate level). The school provides a breakfast club every day during term-time.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This good school serves its community’s needs with dedication and care and provides a secure haven for its pupils. It is not yet outstanding because there has not been enough time for the impact of recent improvements to be realised fully and, although pupils make good progress overall, attainment is still uneven in the different elements of English.
- Children’s skills levels are often significantly below expectations for their age when they join the Nursery class and most are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. They progress well through the school, learn to speak English rapidly and, by the end of Year 6, pupils’ overall attainment is in line with national expectations.
- Pupils’ behaviour is exemplary and they show extremely positive attitudes to learning. They feel very safe in school. They show consideration for others, with older pupils often acting as buddies to younger ones, enhancing the school’s family ethos.
- Good teaching contributes well to pupils’ good achievement. A range of carefully planned strategies to support effective learning are implemented well and consistently across the school. This is helping to bring about improvements in pupils’ achievement and in their confidence as learners. Some pupils struggle to present their work neatly, because the school has not made handwriting a priority.
- The headteacher, supported by able senior staff, has created a strong team ethos, with a sharp focus on continued school improvement. The leadership of teaching and management of performance are good. Regular progress reviews provide detailed information which is used well to target additional support where it is required. The outcomes of reviews are not summarised and shared with all staff and governors, however, and this reduces leaders’ ability to assess readily the impact of its actions for improvement.

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

- Strengthen the impact and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation procedures by providing succinct summaries of progress review outcomes for each year group; and sharing these summaries with all staff and governors through the year so that everyone has a clear picture of how well the school is doing.
- Improve pupils' ability to present their work well by instituting and implementing an effective whole-school handwriting and presentation scheme.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils' overall achievement is good and parents and carers, without exception, expressed how happy they were with this. Pupils are industrious and responsive learners in lessons. They work productively with a partner or in a group. They listen well to each other and show they are increasingly able to argue a point in discussions. Pupils concentrate in lessons and show genuine enjoyment in learning. They use and apply their skills in information and communication technology effectively. Pupils' books show evidence of a good work, but this is not always as well-presented as it might be.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, establishing very positive attitudes to learning, as a result of good teaching and a lively curriculum which engages their interests well. By the time they leave the Reception class, their overall attainment has improved and is closer to national expectations for their age.

By the end of Year 6, attainment in mathematics is broadly average and pupils' progress in mathematics is good. The proportion of pupils on track to reach the higher level in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 is slightly below average although it has risen considerably in the current year, with a number of the more-able pupils achieving particularly well in relation to their starting points.

Regular teaching of letters and the sounds they make is having a positive impact on improving pupils' reading skills. Pupils from Key Stage 1 read to an inspector, showing great enjoyment and interest and demonstrated a growing confidence in using their skills to sound out and understand new words. Attainment in reading has risen continuously over the past two years, as a result of a whole-school focus on reading which has helped pupils to progress well. Attainment in reading is now average by the time pupils leave in Year 6 and has risen from below average to average for the current cohort of Year 2 pupils. Progress in writing has also improved, but the improvement has taken longer to impact on attainment; attainment in writing is lower than in reading, especially in Key Stage 1.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress, in line with that of their peers, because of the carefully-targeted support provided for them. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make very good progress in their acquisition of spoken English skills, as a result of the school's effective support strategies.

## Quality of teaching

Parents and carers strongly agree that their children are taught well. Inspection evidence supports their views, showing that teaching is good overall, with some outstanding practice. Lessons are well-structured and the pace of learning is brisk. Pupils are given a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn and achieve. The use of individual learning targets and 'steps to success' in lessons is especially effective in enabling pupils to understand what they need to do to achieve their learning objectives. Well-trained teaching assistants contribute well to all pupils' learning, particularly disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Teachers usually demonstrate high expectations of pupils, although with a minor inconsistency in respect of handwriting and presentation. In recent times, improving the content of pupils' work has been a priority in teaching; the school recognises that it is now time to address presentation issues in order to reinforce and further develop pupils' growing confidence and pride in themselves as successful learners.

Mixed-age sets based on attainment levels are used in daily sessions to teach pupils about letters and sounds. Daily guided reading sessions are also provided in every class. These strategies are contributing well to on-going improvements in pupils' achievement in reading. In a very effective guided reading session, for example, a group of pupils in Year 3 were reading the Hans Christian Andersen story '*The Little Match Girl*'. They had chosen the book themselves. It was a challenging text for them, with some difficult vocabulary that they had not encountered before. Their teacher made it clear to them that this was not a barrier; she gave them strategies to identify and understand key words; she encouraged them to share their ideas with a partner and help each other. All of this, together with her searching questions and prompts, enabled them to access and thoroughly enjoy the first part of the story. Outstanding teaching enabled pupils to make excellent progress in this session and they were eager to carry on reading the next part of the story independently.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils thrive in an environment where every child is known, cared for and valued. This is helping them to achieve well in both their personal and their academic development. Pupils' behaviour in school is excellent. They feel very safe and secure in school. Pupils have great trust in the adults who care for them and they are confident help is always on hand should they have a problem. Parents and carers expressed very positive views about this aspect of the school. A typical comment described the school as a, 'light in the middle of our community', where cultural diversity is celebrated and all faiths and backgrounds are welcomed, included and accepted.

Pupils are able to explain their clear understanding of different types of bullying; they say that the adults in school make sure that bullying does not occur. The school provides extensive and sensitive support for potentially vulnerable pupils and their families, including collaborative work with a range of agencies that support pupils' health, social and learning needs. The well-attended breakfast club gets the day off to a happy start.

Attendance is improving rapidly and is now average. Inspection evidence shows that decisive actions taken by the school to address identified persistent absence problems have met with success. This has had a very positive impact, enabling pupils to achieve greatly improved access to their educational entitlement.

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## Leadership and management

Members of the governing body and staff at all levels share the headteacher's vision for taking the school forward and his commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils. Senior and middle leaders all contribute well to assuring the quality of the school's work. The leadership and management of performance are effective, with a programme of continuous professional development underpinning on-going improvements in the quality of teaching. This has helped to ensure that teaching is consistently good or better.

Systems to track and assess pupils' progress have been strengthened and improved in recent times and formal reviews now take place each half-term. The information gained is used well to identify promptly when pupils need extra support. Provision for pupils who have additional learning needs is led and managed well, with a wide range of effective interventions contributing well to pupils' good achievement. The school chooses and plans appropriate actions for raising attainment and promoting pupils' learning and progress. For example, appropriate strategies have been implemented to raise pupils' attainment in writing; inspection evidence indicates that pupils' progress in writing is improving, but there has not been sufficient time for this to impact fully on pupils' national test results. Although the school has a wealth of data, progress review outcomes are not summarised succinctly for sharing with all staff and with governors. This means that the picture of the school's progress towards its improvement targets is not defined as clearly as it might otherwise be. Nonetheless, the overall impact of strategic leadership is positive and the school has good capacity for continued improvement.

Governors ensure that safeguarding is given appropriate priority and the school complies with statutory requirements for safeguarding. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. The school's ethos is highly inclusive and discrimination is not tolerated. Residual gaps in performance between subject areas are closing as a result of actions being taken to raise overall attainment in literacy.

The school's curriculum is good. Subjects are brought together in topics that are interesting, relevant and engaging for pupils. Increasingly, opportunities are being found for pupils to practise their writing skills outside of literacy lessons and this is contributing to the improvements in writing progress seen in the current year. A wide variety of enrichment activities enhances the curriculum and adds greatly to pupils' enjoyment. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show a good understanding of the sound moral values the school promotes. There are many opportunities for them to reflect on important issues and they show mature and thoughtful attitudes in their discussions.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.



## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



30 May 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of St Silas Church of England Primary School, Liverpool, L8 3TP**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. It was a great pleasure to meet you all and we enjoyed our conversations with you.

We found that St Silas is a good school. It is a very happy school too and we were very pleased to hear you say how much you enjoy all of the activities that are provided for you. Your education gets off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and you carry on doing well right through the school to the end of Year 6. We saw that you are very polite young people. Your behaviour is excellent and you feel very safe in school. Your attendance has improved considerably this year – well done, keep up the good work and see if you can make it even better! The adults in school look after you well. They make sure you are well taught. Because of this, your learning and progress are good.

These are some things we have asked the school's leaders to do next, because we think they will help your school to carry on improving:

- improve the ways they share information about your learning and progress with all the staff and with the governors
- ensure you all improve your handwriting and presentation skills.

You can help with all of this by continuing to be happy, hard-working learners and by making sure your attendance is good. Thank you again for an enjoyable two days and best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Diane Auton  
Lead inspector

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