

St John's Catholic Junior School

Old Chester Road, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside, CH63 7LH

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2012

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. There is not enough good and better teaching.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is not as good as it is in English. Progress has been slower than should be expected.
- The progress of some pupils with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium is too slow and they do not achieve as well as others in the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils achieve well in English. Standards in writing have improved well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and at times it is outstanding. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils feel safe and well cared for in school.
- Leadership and management of the school are good. There have been significant improvements in key areas of the school's work over the past year.
- Issues from the previous inspection, particularly the school's use of information and communication technology (ICT), have been dealt with very effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons and parts of lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of staff and members of the governing body.
- In addition, inspectors took account of 15 responses to Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including national assessment data and the school's own assessments, the school's self-evaluation of its work, local authority reports, curriculum information, samples of pupils work, minutes from governing body meetings and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Prydwen Elfed-Owens

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Almost all of the pupils are White British in this average-sized junior school.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- An average proportion of pupils receive support through school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school works closely with adjacent infant and high schools as well as with outreach staff from Orrets Meadow special school.
- Additional care is provided before and after school.
- The school meets the current government floor standards for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - making sure that work is closely matched to pupils' different needs and that rates of progress in lessons are checked rigorously
 - using the skills of teaching assistants more effectively to increase the pace of learning for some groups in lessons
 - raising teachers' expectations with regard to pupils' handwriting and spelling
 - marking all pupils' work to the best standards seen in the school in all classes and subjects.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by providing enough challenge, especially for more-able pupils, and by continuing to develop opportunities for all pupils to apply their skills in different ways across subjects.
- Keep a close check on the progress of all pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium and make sure that their achievement matches that of others in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most pupils' attainment is average when they start the school in Year 3. By the end of Year 6 attainment is still average overall, as it has been for the past four years. School assessments show some recent good improvement in 2012, particularly in English results where an increased number of pupils achieved a higher level than expected nationally.
- This improvement is due to the high priority given to developing writing and the good opportunities pupils have to write for different purposes, for example in their 'learning journeys'. The quality of pupils' handwriting throughout the school, however, and the accuracy of spelling require improvement.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 generally read accurately from books that match their interests and abilities and they are clear about the kinds of books they like to read.
- Although progress has been made in mathematics, especially over the past year, it has not kept pace with English and too few pupils made more than expected progress from Year 3 to the end of Year 6. How mathematics is taught is developing and some teachers are beginning to think of imaginative ways for pupils to practise their skills, but these approaches are not embedded throughout the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs who are given additional support through school action plus make good, and sometimes excellent, progress. Teachers from Orrets Meadow Special School, who share their expertise, provide first-class support for pupils and equally effective training for teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, there is high-quality teaching for individual pupils.
- Progress is slower for pupils supported in classes by school action only. Their progress is not checked rigorously enough and sometimes less is expected of them because work is not matched well enough to what they need to learn and improve. In addition, teaching assistants' time is sometimes not used efficiently enough.
- The gap between the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (supported by the pupil premium) and others in the school fluctuates from year to year. Some headway is being made because the school is managing the funding carefully and checking the difference it is making to pupils' progress. Nevertheless, this level of rigour is relatively recent and there is still work to be done to make sure that all pupils in that group achieve as well as others.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching has improved under the headteacher's leadership and there is some good and better teaching, there are still aspects to improve in order to make it consistently good or outstanding.
- Relationships in classrooms are very good. Teachers manage pupils well and give plenty of praise and encouragement. This shows pupils that they are valued and encourages them to work hard.
- Teachers' knowledge of subjects is generally good and resources are used effectively to make learning more interesting. Particularly noteworthy is the way technology is used in lessons. Teachers use electronic whiteboards skilfully to help pupils focus on the lesson. Ipods, laptops and a wonderful working model of the solar system are other examples of technology that help to enliven lessons and improve learning.
- Where teaching is most effective teachers explain clearly what pupils will learn. No time is lost in getting them engaged in practical work and every pupil, whatever their ability, has a well-matched task to complete that helps them to make the best possible progress. They work independently and concentration levels are high because they are confident about what they are

doing. Adults in the classroom check pupils' progress continually to help them to correct mistakes and improve their work. Pupils have opportunities to think about their work and assess for themselves how well they have done.

- In some lessons groups of pupils mark time by listening to the teacher rather than being engaged in more practical learning activities with a teaching assistant. Planning for different abilities is not always sharp enough and some less able pupils in classes are not given the work they really need to help them learn better, whereas in other lessons too little is expected of more-able pupils.
- Older pupils say that they usually find teachers' marking helpful in literacy and mathematics but less so in other subjects. This reflects the inconsistent quality of marking across the school. Where it is good, pupils are shown clearly what they have done well and what they need to do next. At worst, there are no teachers' comments and some work is not marked at all.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy learning and work hard in lessons. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is often exemplary. Pupils are always courteous and polite.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect others' views and are very tolerant of their differences. They have a strong sense of what is right and wrong and have contributed to the writing of their rules for good behaviour.
- They feel safe in school and share trusting relationships with adults who, they say, take very good care of them. Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take and of how to keep themselves safe outside of school. They are adamant that incidents of bullying or name-calling are rare, a view backed up by the school's safeguarding records and views of parents.
- Pupils' attendance is average and most arrive in time for school. Many are encouraged to do so by the breakfast club. The additional care before and after school and the safety it provides is greatly appreciated by parents.
- Pupils contribute well to the everyday life of the school. They carry out duties such as eco-club and 'activators' conscientiously. The school council gives pupils some say in school affairs. Improvements to the school grounds and a survey to assess the healthy nature of pupils' diets are the results of some of its work.
- Overall, pupils are supported well for their move to the next stage of their education.

The leadership and management are good

- Since her appointment the headteacher has been a very significant force in driving school improvement.
- In a relatively short time, and with the strong support of the restructured leadership team, she has increased the rate of improvement and overseen positive changes in pupils' behaviour, teaching, how subjects are taught and the way in which pupils' progress is checked and information used to help them do better.
- The headteacher has successfully brought about significant improvement in the school's use of ICT since she was appointed.
- The school has worked very well with the local authority to help leaders evaluate the school's work. This has given them an accurate picture of the school and clear direction for continued improvement. Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance is now robust and accurate.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are well planned and rigorously followed. New teachers are successfully introduced to school systems and expectations. Training is helping all

teachers to improve their skills. All senior leaders fulfil a crucial role in checking pupils' progress and the effectiveness of teaching. Pupils' progress is linked to teachers' performance targets, and all teachers are expected to measure up fully to the Teachers' Standards.

- Different subjects provide good learning opportunities for most pupils. A good selection of clubs after school help pupils develop their skills and foster their interests and promote pupils' personal development well. Subject leaders are beginning to plan imaginative links across subjects to heighten pupils' interest and enable them to use skills in different ways. Strong links with adjacent schools also increase pupils' learning opportunities.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body knows the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. Access to good-quality information and increased understanding of national data enable it to challenge the school effectively and hold it to account. Governors are very supportive of the school and ambitious for all of its pupils. To that end, the impact of pupil premium spending, to provide additional teaching time and resources to raise achievement, is carefully scrutinised to ensure equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils. The governing body ensures that statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are fully met. All staff have completed up-to-date, relevant training, and policies and procedures are checked regularly to make sure they remain effective.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 105080 |
| Local authority | Wirral |
| Inspection number | 400754 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary Aided |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 246 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Paul Baxter |
| Headteacher | Elaine Mullins |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16 March 2010 |
| Telephone number | 0151 6459615 |
| Fax number | 0151 6456673 |
| Email address | schooloffice@stjohns-junior.wirral.sch.uk |

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