

St Columba's Catholic Primary School

Hillside Road, Huyton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Merseyside, L36 8BL

Inspection dates 10–11 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This happy school successfully lives out the motto, 'We are stronger together.'
- Children get off to a good start in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve well.
- Between Years 1 and 6, pupils achieve well. They make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is good and some practice is outstanding. Lessons are lively and exciting and provide exceptionally well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary because all adults set high expectations of how pupils are to behave. Pupils say that they feel very safe and their parents unanimously agree with this.
- The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is outstanding. Together with senior leaders and the governors, they have improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement well since the last inspection and this is set to continue.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not consistently set work in lessons which challenges pupils to achieve the higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to improve their physical well-being by participating in a wide enough range of sporting and physical activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons or parts of lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body, groups of pupils, parents and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined the school's own documentation relating to pupils' progress, school self-evaluation and policies relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke informally to pupils during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- There were only six parental responses received at the time of the inspection from the online questionnaire (Parent View); these are too few to be available to view by the inspectors. However, the inspectors took account of the school's own parental survey, spoke to a group of parents in a meeting and also informally to parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Clare Henderson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anthony Buckley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well-above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well above average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school runs a before-school club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is part of a local consortium of schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring teachers consistently set work in lessons which challenges pupils to achieve the higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Ensure the curriculum provides pupils with more opportunities to take part in a wider range of sporting and physical activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of children start school with skills which are low in comparison with those typical for their age. Due to lively and interesting teaching, which captures their imagination, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although their attainment is below average by the time they begin Year 1.
- Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils achieve well overall although some do not reach the higher standards of which they are capable because their work is not always difficult enough to challenge them.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school and standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 in 2012 and 2013 were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. These results were similar to those achieved in 2011.
- Pupils' achievement is not outstanding because teachers do not consistently set work in lessons which challenges the most-able pupils to achieve the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils get off to a good start with their reading. Well-planned teaching, of the way in which letters link to sounds enables pupils to begin to read confidently from an early age and develop an enthusiasm for reading.
- Pupils continue to develop their reading skills as they move up through the school. Termly family bedtime reading sessions are one of the many ways adults help develop a love of reading.
- A strong focus on extending pupils' mental mathematical skills through quick-fire question and answer sessions which demand high levels of recall of multiplication facts are evident in all classes. As a result all pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because their needs are closely identified and they receive good teaching with specific additional support from skilled and experienced teaching assistants.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium generally make similar progress compared to other pupils in the school because their individual needs are identified, support is given to help them in class and in small groups, and the effectiveness of this support is checked to make sure it works.
- The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 was below that of other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by two terms. However, the gaps in attainment between these and other pupils in the school are closing rapidly.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good quality teaching, for example, in class lessons and individual and group support times ensures that pupils make good progress from their starting points during their time in the school. This is because teachers aim high, there is strong mutual respect evident between adults and pupils and pupils are encouraged to do their best.
- This view is supported unanimously by the parents the inspectors spoke to and by pupils who say, 'Teachers make our learning fun.'
- In the many lessons where teaching is at least good, work is set at the right level for pupils. For example, in an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson to plan and draft a piece of descriptive writing, pupils with different abilities were given tasks at varying levels of difficulty, which challenged them well, and so all pupils enjoyed the lesson and made rapid progress.
- In such lessons, skilful intervention by both the teacher and teaching assistant moved the pupils' learning on rapidly. However, this is not always evident and occasionally, teachers do not enable pupils, particularly the most able, to move on to new learning quickly enough to challenge them. Consequently not all pupils make the rapid progress or achieve the levels of which they are capable.

- Marking of pupils' work generally shows them how to improve their work.
- Teachers make a strong contribution to the outstanding provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop independence and self-confidence through playing together in the exciting outdoor environment.
- Imaginative teaching and pupils' full participation in learning are integral in all lessons. In such lessons, pupils' literacy, mathematics, drama and information and communication technology skills are successfully promoted and applied, which prepares pupils well for their future lives.
- However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to improve their physical well-being by participating in a wide enough range of sporting and physical activities.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported. The adults who support them work very effectively with class teachers to make sure that these pupils make good progress.
- The teaching of pupils eligible for pupil-premium funding, who are currently in the school, is well managed with appropriate resources available. As a result these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour observed by inspectors in both lessons and around the school is outstanding. This has an extremely positive effect on pupils' good achievement.
- Parents fully agree with this view and are very happy with the high level of care and support provided and are very pleased with standards of behaviour at the school.
- Pupils very much enjoy school and have excellent attitudes to learning. The respect and care they show for all adults and their classmates is inspirational.
- School records show that behaviour is typically excellent around the school and over time. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour. In discussion, pupils were certain that bullying 'never happens here' but if it should occur, it would be dealt with swiftly by the teachers. They clearly understand the various forms bullying might take but were equally sure it was not part of life at their school.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and willingly take part in a wide range of activities which allow them to present their opinions and bring about change. School councillors and playground leaders are examples of these opportunities.
- All groups of pupils feel very safe and are acutely aware of what constitutes unsafe situations. They know how to keep themselves and others safe, including while using the internet. Pupils and staff receive training in e-safety. Excellent links with the police and fire services keep pupils updated with how to stay safe in their homes and the local community.
- Attendance is broadly average and continues to improve rapidly because the importance of going to school to learn is clearly explained to pupils and parents. Absence is followed up very rigorously by the office staff and the learning mentor.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, care and welfare are exemplary. Strong links with parents and opportunities such as the family literacy fun and stay and play sessions strengthen these partnerships and children's confidence and enjoyment of school very well.

The leadership and management are good

- In most aspects, the school is very well led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Together with the governing body and senior leaders, they check to make sure their plans for improvement are working and enjoy the support of staff, who say, 'It's a privilege to work here.'
- Senior leaders rigorously check on the quality of teaching. Targets set for teachers concentrate on raising pupils' achievement and are well linked to training needs.
- Although effective in the main, the leadership of teaching has not fully ensured that some pupils are consistently challenged to reach the higher levels of attainment. This, together with a

curriculum that does not fully extend pupils' physical well-being, are the reasons why leadership and management are good rather than outstanding.

- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Well-planned opportunities to reflect upon a wide range of religions and cultures are very well promoted.
- Pupils' learning and enjoyment of school is greatly enriched by residential visits and opportunities to excel in art and music. However, the curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide enough range of sporting and physical activities.
- Safeguarding and child-protection procedures fully meet statutory requirements.
- Excellent partnerships exist with the local authority and local school consortium that work closely with the school in supporting one another and accelerating pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching.
- All adults and, in particular, the parent mentor have strong relationships with parents, who say they are well informed about the work of the school because of the website and use of Twitter. As a result they are very supportive of the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has a good range of skills and expertise that benefit the school well. Governors attend training, which provides them with the skills to question and challenge senior leaders about how well the school is performing. They are very supportive of the headteacher and staff, and share their ambition for the school to be successful.
- Individual governors link with a class and are responsible for liaising with staff over various parts of school life, such as child protection and special educational needs. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and of pupils' achievement and where it needs to be improved. Governors are well informed about the management of teachers' performance, including that of the headteacher, and they review teachers' pay accordingly. In conjunction with the headteacher, they manage the school's finances efficiently, including the use of pupil-premium funding.

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	104480
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	427259

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Russell
Headteacher	Rónán A Dunne
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2010
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