

The Sylvester Primary School

St John's Road, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside, L36 0UX

Inspection dates 15–16 October 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.

- Pupils achieve well from low starting points. By the end of Year 6, attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children settle quickly and well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress.
- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning very effectively.
- Pupils enjoy school and trust the adults. They feel safe and well looked after. Behaviour is outstanding in class and around the school. From the earliest age children learn how to concentrate, organise themselves and work well together.
- Leaders and managers are ambitious to improve further. They make rigorous checks on all aspects of the school's work and take prompt and decisive action where necessary. This has brought about a rise in standards across the school.
- Pupils take part in a wide range of interesting and exciting experiences through different themes, visits and clubs. Many pupils enjoy extra sporting activities.
- The governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and where it can do better. They make every effort to be informed in order to make effective decisions.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to ensure all pupils, and particularly the most-able pupils, make outstanding progress. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to work on their own and think things out for themselves.
- Middle leaders take an active role in checking on pupils' progress but opportunities are too limited for them to observe teaching practice.

Information about this inspection

- Two inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by eight teachers. In addition they observed teaching assistants working with small groups of pupils.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, members of staff, pupils, parents, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at development plans, records of pupils' progress, arrangements for safeguarding and documentation relating to pay and performance.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents from the school's recent questionnaire, the 14 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and from meeting parents attending a celebration assembly.
- Inspectors scrutinised the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Diane Auton

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and only a few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is high. Pupil premium is additional funding given to the school for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of additional needs is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection there has been an acting headteacher during 2011-12 and a new headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further so that more of it becomes outstanding by:
 - organising lessons so that pupils are working independently at the earliest opportunity
 - making sure there is always enough challenge to stretch the highest-attaining pupils so that more pupils are working at the higher levels
 - increasing the opportunities for middle leaders to develop their skills in observing and evaluating teaching and so contributing effectively to their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start in the Nursery and Reception classes with a range of skills which are below those typically expected for their ages and in some cases, well below. They settle quickly and learn how to listen, concentrate and organise themselves so that they make good progress and most start Year 1 as confident learners.
- Standards in Key Stage 1 are rising. In 2012 no pupil achieved the higher Level 3 in any subject but in 2013 pupils achieved Level 3 in all areas of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 has been consistently above average for some years. After a dip in attainment in 2012, standards have risen sharply to above average in reading, writing and mathematics, and in 2013 the school achieved its highest results in three years. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 is well above average and at Level 5 it is above average in reading and mathematics.
- As standards rise, the rate of progress made by pupils is faster. In 2013 the proportions making typical and good progress are both above national figures. Higher-attaining pupils are making particularly good progress in reading and mathematics.
- Reading is taught well across the school. Younger children learn how to link letters and sounds and the proportion reaching the expected standard in Year 1, although just below average, is rising steadily. Pupils enjoy reading and are happy to talk about the books they love most.
- Pupils entitled to receive support through pupil premium funding are benefiting from extra one-to-one tuition where necessary or being taught in smaller groups. The school ensures that they can take full part in the many exciting trips and events. As a result, the gap in achievement between these pupils and others is narrowing each year. In 2013 the gap decreased to about one term behind in English and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, both at school action and school action plus, achieve well. The school has a steadily declining register of such pupils because it identifies problems very early and provides intensive support. As a result, many pupils are able to come off the register because their needs have been met.
- The school has used the special funding for sports to employ sports apprentices who provide a good range of clubs and activities before and after school and support physical education lessons. The proportion of pupils who now take part in and enjoy sporting activity has risen substantially to include most pupils in the school. The school is using this extra sporting expertise to develop the confidence of all adults to teach physical education effectively.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good across the school with some which is outstanding. Teaching supports the learning of all groups of pupils well including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those entitled to receive pupil premium funding. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in tests is increasing each year.
- Teachers use good subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons, often based on themes which interest the pupils. Lessons are planned to take account of what pupils already know and the next steps they need to take. Lower-ability pupils are very well supported but sometimes higher-attaining pupils have too much support. Sometimes they are not challenged sufficiently to think things out for themselves by working independently.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because teachers plan a really interesting range of activities which gives a good balance between children listening to an adult and having many opportunities to choose learning activities for themselves. Children enjoy lots of counting, writing, colouring, building and physical activities and work and play well together.

- Teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 build on this good start so that pupils become independent learners at an early stage. In an outstanding lesson in Year 1 pupils were making tally charts through a variety of activities including throwing dice, researching favourite pets, checking the most popular colour of cars passing the school and recording the different types of vehicles passing by. Every pupil was interested, contributing and enjoying their learning so that behaviour was exceptional.
- Teachers use the range of subjects effectively giving pupils opportunities to research on their own and to explore new themes. The school has addressed a previous gap in achievement by planning lessons which appeal equally to girls and boys so that both now do equally well. The school provides numerous visits to theatres and places of interest and has a media suite for film making and recording. A wide range of clubs including foreign languages, choir, origami and numerous sports takes learning beyond the classroom. Pupils who attend these clubs are able to graduate from the Children's University.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the learning of small groups of pupils working closely with class teachers or taking small groups on their own.
- Marking is effective in all classes. Pupils know their targets, what they have to do to achieve them and how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. Pupils enjoy spending time together and contributing to the life of the school through the school council and as mini mentors helping younger pupils. Some take part in the local children's parliament. Others sometimes form part of the interviewing panel for appointing staff. The school council has the opportunity to meet with the Chair of the Governing Body to contribute their views on school improvement.
- Pupils enjoy being members of one of the five school teams which compete for points for good work and behaviour. They like the spirit of friendly competition.
- Behaviour around the school, in assembly and in lessons is excellent. Pupils are keen to learn, quickly and efficiently organise themselves and try to do their best. They contribute exceptionally well to their own learning.
- Pupils are very aware of different kinds of bullying and unkind language relating to race, gender and sexual orientation. They say that it is not tolerated in school and that there is no bullying. They have complete trust in the adults in school and know that they will sort out any problems they might have.
- Pupils very much appreciate the work of the learning mentor who provides support for children and families where necessary. They also enjoy having the sports coaches who, they say, ensure there are no arguments during games at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and their parents agree. The many parents attending the celebration assembly spoke about how much their children enjoy school and want to be here. Attendance has risen steadily over time and is average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, very well supported by the deputy headteacher has made a huge impact in the school through her excellent leadership. She has restored confidence after a dip in attainment, won the full support of staff and parents and leads the school with determination and vigour. The school is well placed to improve further.
- School leaders and all staff check regularly on the progress pupils are making and so are quickly able to spot when any pupil is falling behind and needs extra support. Senior leaders check on the quality of teaching and make sure that salary progression is linked closely to how well pupils

are making progress. There are plans in place to include middle leaders in a series of lesson observations to encourage them to easily recognise the qualities which make teaching outstanding.

- The good curriculum plays an important part in making learning interesting and enjoyable and in broadening the scope of pupils' experience, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders use part of the pupil premium funding to make sure that all pupils are able to participate in all activities. Pupils enjoy the exciting range of clubs and the opportunity to be graduates of the children's university. Many improvements have been made to the decor in school so that it offers a bright, stimulating and colourful environment where pupils enjoy learning.
- The extra funding that the school receives is invested carefully to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to be successful. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The deputy headteacher provides strong leadership for the support of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs so that these pupils achieve well and are making above-average progress.
- The appointment of an additional learning mentor to provide social and emotional support has been very beneficial. The learning mentor works with many groups of pupils and families including pupils suffering from low self-esteem. The impact of this work can be seen in the better progress many pupils are making and in their sense of security and well-being.
- The local authority supported the school well in a period of leadership change but now only provides light touch support because the school is well able to manage its own improvement.
- Safeguarding has a high priority and meets requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the strengths and priorities of the school because they are extremely involved in school improvement planning and visit the school regularly. Governors attend training to help them understand the complexities of their role and how to do it well. The governing body oversees the spending of pupil premium and sports funding to make sure it increases the opportunities and support for pupils. They ensure that salary progression is linked to classroom and whole-school performance. The governing body makes sure that pupils and staff work in a safe and attractive environment. It holds senior leaders to account well.

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	104419
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	426209

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Brown
Headteacher	Juliet Brown
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2008
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