

St Clare's Catholic Primary School

Garmoyle Close, Wavertree, Liverpool, L15 0DW

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2013

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		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' progress in their learning is too variable across the school.
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics, reading and writing at the end of Year 6 is lower than it should be given their individual starting points.
- Across the school, the quality of teaching is too variable resulting in pupils making slower progress in lessons where teaching is less effective. The quality of teaching overall requires improvement.
- In many lessons, tasks do not stretch the most able pupils sufficiently so they make less progress than they should, given their starting points.
- A minority of pupils do not display positive attitudes to learning when they become bored in lessons.
- On occasions, learning for all pupils is disrupted by a small number of pupils who do not respond positively or quickly to teachers' instructions.
- The headteacher and senior leaders, including governors, have not improved pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching with sufficient speed since the previous inspection. Consequently, there remain too many inconsistencies in teaching and in pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards attained at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen in reading, writing and mathematics since the previous inspection.
- Pupils attain higher standards in mathematics at the end of Year 6 than previously.
- Gaps between pupils supported through the pupil premium funding are narrowing compared to pupils nationally.
- School leaders and the strong governing body, have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They know what needs to be done to ensure that the school continues to build on the improvements made since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or part lessons, two of which were jointly observed, one with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors listened to pupils read and observed a number of teaching assistants working with pupils, both in and out of lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents and teachers, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- In the course of the inspection, inspectors took account of the 12 responses made by parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as a questionnaire seeking the views of parents circulated by the school, and considered the 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and scrutinised plans for improvement, as well as documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. A broad range of other evidence was also scrutinised, including current pupils' work in books from all classes and the school's own data and monitoring records of how well pupils progress in their learning.

Inspection team

Declan McCauley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Prydwen Elfed-Owens

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a slightly smaller than average sized primary school.
- An above average proportion of pupils are supported through school action. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium has increased significantly since the previous inspection, and is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government 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.
- Most pupils are from minority ethnic groups and this proportion is increasing.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so it is always at least good and more is outstanding to improve achievement further and raise standards by:
 - consistently challenging all pupils, particularly the most able, through matching learning tasks more carefully to pupils' ability levels
 - eliminating wasted learning time through sharpening teachers' awareness of what pupils are doing in lessons
 - improving grammar, punctuation and spelling in pupils' writing
 - using information and communication technology more effectively to support learning
 - ensuring that when pupils are provided with worksheets in lessons, they are able to read them
 - giving pupils more opportunities to work by themselves.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of school leaders in order to secure more rapid whole-school improvement by:
 - ensuring that those responsible for improving literacy and numeracy monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' learning more frequently and rigorously
 - tackling the underperformance of teachers more robustly
 - using high-performing teachers to coach effectively and improve the practice of weaker teachers.
- Improve behaviour in lessons so pupils' learning is not disrupted by:
 - ensuring pupils remain interested during lessons
 - more effectively managing the challenging behaviour presented by a few pupils in lessons
 - ensuring pupils are supervised adequately at all times.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement in reading, writing and mathematics because the standards they attain remain below the national average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. The widest gap in the standards attained by pupils in school compared to all pupils nationally is in English grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- From their individual starting points, pupils do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable because of the variable quality of teaching.
- Most children start school with knowledge and skills which are below the typical expectations for their age. They achieve well in the Nursery and Reception classes because of effective teaching. When they start Year 1, the attainment of most pupils is nearer to age-related expectations. As they progress through Key Stage 1 their progress increases. Even so, they still do not reach the standards expected of them at the end of Year 2 even though these have improved since the previous inspection, particularly for boys in writing. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment remained below the national average last academic year although it has increased in mathematics since the previous inspection.
- The latest accurate school tracking data show accelerated progress being made by Year 6 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics during this term, which enables school leaders to confidently predict higher standards of attainment at the end of this academic year.
- Progress made by pupils from their individual starting points has improved since the previous inspection although it varies between classes. The school's tracking data show during the last academic year nearly three-quarters of pupils in Year 2 made the progress expected of them in reading, whilst over half of the year group exceeded the progress expected of them. When compared to progress made by pupils in reading last year in Year 5 the difference is stark, as less than two-fifths of the year group made the progress expected of them and no pupil made more than expected progress.
- Pupils' knowledge and use of the sounds letters make (phonics) has improved in Year 1 because of the effective teaching of this aspect.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and supported by the pupil premium are closing the attainment gap compared to all pupils nationally in mathematics, reading and writing. In mathematics and writing, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals remain over two terms behind all pupils nationally, while in reading they are nearly two terms behind all pupils nationally.
- Pupils do not all have equal opportunities to achieve well in school because of the variable quality of teaching.
- The achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups, those who are most able, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is the same as that of other pupils in the school; the progress they make in their learning varies, it is stronger in year groups where the teaching is more effective.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because over time and currently across the school, there are variations in the quality of teaching, which means that progress in some classes is too slow. Teaching in the school varies from inadequate to outstanding.
- In some classes, pupils have little time to improve their skills by working things out for themselves. Learning activities do not always provide a great enough degree of difficulty to challenge the most able. Conversely, the text on worksheets can be far too difficult for lower-ability pupils to read, preventing them from learning effectively.
- A few teachers occasionally seem unaware of which pupils are ready to undertake additional learning tasks when they have finished their work and are waiting to be told what to do next. In

one numeracy lesson, the most able wasted learning time and did not make the progress of which they were capable when they merely revisited work on balancing fractions similar to an exercise they had successfully completed the previous day.

- Some of the most effective teaching was observed in Year 1 and Year 6. In these classes, pupils were making rapid progress in their learning. In Year 1, the teacher made learning fun. In a history lesson focused on comparing toys from the past to the present day, there was a sense of awe and wonder amongst the pupils who learned at a very fast rate because they were so interested in what the teacher had planned.
- Where teachers question pupils astutely to probe and challenge their understanding and encourage them to reflect carefully on what they have learned, pupils make fast progress in their learning. One teacher was observed questioning a group of pupils skilfully about the features of formal and informal letters and this helped the pupils to clarify these differences.
- Teaching assistants work well with pupils in lessons and support their learning of basic literacy and numeracy skills well.
- A minority of teachers ensure that learning tasks provide just the right level of interest and challenge for pupils. Where this is the case, pupils are highly motivated and eager to learn.
- In the Reception classroom, the teacher ensured children used information and communication technology very effectively as a tool to support learning about numbers, although it is not used as effectively in other year groups.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour and safety requires improvement because at times learning is disrupted in lessons by a few pupils who become bored and their behaviour is not managed as effectively as it might be by teachers. A few pupils do not immediately carry out what their teachers ask them to do.
- Teachers do not always supervise pupils in their classes as effectively as they might. Around the school, the majority of pupils are polite and respectful towards each other and towards adults. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying and what to do if it happens. Pupils report that when they raise their concerns about bullying or other pupils' inappropriate behaviour in the school with adults, such as the midday supervisors, it is usually resolved to their satisfaction. Pupils say they feel safe in school.
- Pupils take on many responsibilities in school and take great pride in their special roles. These help to prepare them well for the next stage in their learning. Parents expressed some concerns about how well behaved pupils are in school and about how bullying is dealt with by staff. Even so, the majority of parents are happy with how well their children are looked after by the school. Pupils and staff do not see behaviour as a problem in this school.
- Attendance at school has improved since the previous inspection because of the robust approach with which school leaders and governors have tackled the problem. They have been well supported by the education welfare officer. This tough approach has resulted in the proportion of pupils who were regularly absent from school being reduced dramatically.
- School leaders use exclusion successfully to improve behaviour in school and to ensure pupils concerned are able to gain access to support outside school. They are supported strongly in this strategy by members of the governing body, who quite correctly display 'zero tolerance' of instances of violent behaviour in school.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The variability in the quality of teaching and achievement of pupils means leadership and management requires improvement to become good.
- School and subject leaders monitor the impact that teaching has on learning in literacy and numeracy, but the monitoring lacks the sharpness and rigour required to ensure improvement takes place at a fast rate. The frequency of the monitoring is insufficiently regular for senior

leaders to measure how rapidly improvements are being made and if they are consistent across the school.

- Where less effective teaching has been identified by school leaders, it has been tackled well, although the inconsistencies which remain in the quality of teaching have not been tackled as rapidly or robustly as they might have been.
- The faster rate of pupils' progress and improvements in attainment are the direct result of the support provided and changes made by school leaders.
- The senior and middle leadership teams have been improved well since the previous inspection. They now have a clear understanding of what constitutes good teaching through working with a range of partners, including the local authority, that have supported the school well since the previous inspection.
- There is now a robust tracking system in place, which school leaders have developed to enable all teachers to have a good understanding of what levels pupils are at in their learning and how much progress they are expected to make each academic year. School leaders use this tracking system well to identify pupils who are falling behind in their learning so that additional support can be provided to help them catch up with their work.
- School leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well; they have created a strongly-focused plan for school improvement which rightly places the greatest importance on improving teaching and pupils' achievement. They have developed the curriculum well to interest and excite pupils and it contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. School leaders are beginning to use the best teachers to coach colleagues whose teaching is weaker.
- School leaders, including governors, are using the additional Primary School Sports funding well to provide additional sports teaching and coaching for pupils to enable them to develop more healthy lifestyles. At present, there is no definitive plan for how the impact of this funding will be measured or evaluated.
- Procedures for keeping pupils safe are secure. All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is strong. Since the previous inspection the governors have evolved into a finely honed management body who want the best for all pupils attending the school. Governors regularly check on pupils' achievement, they have a good understanding of pupils' progress and standards attained; they use this information well to check on the quality of teaching. The performance of the headteacher is managed very soundly by governors. Through their improved performance management systems, they reward better teachers, giving them more responsibility whilst providing additional support for weaker teachers.
 - Governors are very aware of the use of pupil premium funding within the school and know it is making a difference, even to the point of measuring the impact of the funding on all academic aspects of eligible pupils' individual achievements.

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	104648
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	426068

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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Aidan Prescott
Headteacher	Kerry O'Sullivan
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2011
Telephone number	0151 733 4318
Fax number	0151 735 0172
Email address	clares-ao@st-clares.liverpool.sch.uk

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