

Our Lady and St Swithin's Catholic Primary School

Parkstile Lane, Liverpool, Merseyside, L11 0BQ

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement is inadequate. During their time at the school, pupils do not make the progress they should. Given pupils' starting points, standards at the end of Year 2 and 6 are too low. There is a legacy of underachievement.
- Teaching over time is inadequate. Too many teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils or plan work well enough to match their varying needs and abilities, especially in mathematics and writing.
- Teachers' marking is ineffective. Pupils are not clear about how to improve their work and fail to correct their mistakes.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are underdeveloped. They are given too few opportunities to practise their skills, especially in writing, across subjects.
- A small minority of pupils lose interest in lessons when the work fails to engage them and lacks challenge. When this happens, they disrupt the learning of others. As a result, behaviour requires improvement.
- Middle leaders, including those responsible for leading subjects are not having sufficient impact on improving teaching and pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders, including governors have not attended to weaknesses in teaching quickly or effectively enough. As a result, the pupils' achievement and the school's effectiveness have declined since the last inspection.
- The school shows little evidence that it can bring about the necessary improvements without the continued intense support from the local authority.

The school has the following strengths

- The vast majority of pupils have exemplary manners and are extremely polite.
- The new governing body holds leaders to account effectively.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils understand how to stay safe in different situations.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the temporary headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the temporary headteacher and assistant headteacher, middle leaders, other staff, two groups of pupils, governors and representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 57 responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire, Parent View, and 33 completed staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's tracking of pupils' progress, records of behaviour and safety, school improvement plans, records relating to classroom observations and the performance management of staff, safeguarding documents and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- The inspectors also looked at pupils' work, checked information on pupils' attendance and heard some pupils read in Year 2 and Year 4.
- Inspectors visited the school's breakfast club.

Inspection team

Barbara Flitcroft, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bimla Kumari

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The number of pupils on roll has decreased and the school is now smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Since 2011, there have been considerable staff changes. There have been eight headteachers, some of whom were interim, acting or temporary. There have been two headteachers since the previous inspection. The present temporary headteacher had, at the time of the inspection, been in post for two months.
- The deputy headteacher became the temporary headteacher in November 2013.
- The school has received support from the local authority, the archdiocese and some other schools during the last three years. Many new governors were appointed in October 2013.
- A daily breakfast club is run by the school.
- In the previous inspection, in March 2013, the school was found to be requiring improvement. A monitoring visit in June 2013, conducted by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, found that leaders and governors were not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to at least good, so that that all pupils achieve as well as they can, especially in writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving and provide work which is at the right level of challenge for their varying abilities
 - all teachers insist that all pupils present their work to a high standard
 - marking is improved so that pupils know how to improve and are given opportunities to respond to teachers' advice and correct their mistakes
 - teachers plan lessons which are engaging and maintain pupils' interest so that their behaviour and attitudes to learning are always at least good
 - pupils have opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects
 - pupils make secure and brisk progress in spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting as a result of a frequent, specific focus on the development and assessment of these skills
 - pupils can quickly recall important number facts and use this knowledge to solve word

problems successfully

- the provision outdoors in the Early Years Foundation Stage offers children a similar range and quality of learning activities that they experience indoors.

■ Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:

- ensuring stable leadership of the school
- checking the quality of teaching rigorously and holding teachers to account for pupils' achievement
- developing the roles of middle leaders, including subject leaders, so that they have a good understanding of how well pupils achieve and how well they are taught in their areas of responsibility across the whole school
- making sure all teachers develop skills to make an accurate assessment of how well pupils are doing
- ensuring school staff receive more focused and specific support, relevant to their developmental needs.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate because across Years 1 to 6 pupils do not make the progress they should from their starting points, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Overall, standards at the end of Year 2 have been significantly below average for the last two years. In 2013, standards in reading improved and, although still below average, were higher than in writing and mathematics. In writing, too few pupils reached the nationally expected Level 2 and none reached the higher Level 3. Low standards of attainment and pupils' slow progress through Key Stage 1 have resulted in pupils making inadequate progress overall.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2013 fell from average to well below average. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar and in mathematics was very low. In writing, about one third of pupils failed to reach the nationally expected Level 4. Furthermore, too many pupils failed to make the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics. Achievement in Key Stage 2 is, therefore, inadequate.
- Pupils of all abilities underachieve. The most able pupils do not achieve as well as they should because too often their work lacks challenge. In many classes, more able pupils are required to complete the same work as average ability pupils before they are allowed to move to harder work. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have also underachieved as a result of weak teaching and programmes that have not met their needs.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium underachieve and make inadequate progress. In Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was about four terms behind other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders recognise that the gap in attainment between those supported by pupil premium and their peers is too wide. The pupil premium funding is now being targeted more effectively. Pupils are now taught in smaller groups or individually, and better teaching for these pupils is helping them to catch up. However, the impact of this has yet to be reflected in significantly improved achievement.
- Although the school ensures that all pupils are included in everything it offers, wide variations in achievement across year groups mean that the school's efforts to promote equality of opportunity are not effective. Pupils are not adequately prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Over time, pupils have underachieved in reading, but school data and inspection evidence show that progress since the beginning of this academic year has started to accelerate. In 2013, too few pupils reached the expected standard in the Year 1 national check of pupils' skills in linking letters with sounds (phonics). Changes to arrangements for teaching phonics have helped to ensure learning is better suited to pupils' varying needs. In 2013, most pupils in Year 2 reached the nationally expected Level 2 in reading, which is an improvement. A strong focus has been placed on reading for pleasure and this is evident across the school.
- Writing has not improved and progress remains too slow. Pupils' skills are underdeveloped because they do not have the opportunity to practise their writing skills across subjects. Presentation is poor and many pupils make basic spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. Many pupils do not make good enough progress in mathematics because much of the work provided for the whole class is the same. Too often, the most able pupils already understand what is being taught. Some less able pupils find the work too difficult.
- Children start in the Nursery class with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below and sometimes well below those typical for their age. Overall, throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, most children develop their skills at a similar rate to that expected nationally. However, teaching is not strong enough to enable them to make good progress, especially in the nursery. Only a minority of children reach a good level of development by the start of Year 1.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Teaching over time is inadequate. Too little is of the good quality needed to accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment quickly. However, as a result of the leaders' very recent actions, teaching has started to improve. Although more teaching is now good, too much still requires improvement and a small minority remains inadequate.
- Teachers do not plan work to meet pupils' different abilities effectively. In some lessons, all ability groups are required to complete the same tasks. This means that for some, work is too hard and for others it is too easy. As a result, pupils' progress in developing new skills and knowledge is too slow. The most able pupils, for example, waste valuable time completing work they already know how to do, while those who find work too difficult fall further behind.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are too low. For example, they do not insist that pupils always present their work to the best of their ability. In some classes, the careless, untidy presentation by some pupils is too readily accepted by pupils and teachers alike and this holds back the progress pupils make.
- Teachers' marking is improving, but is still too inconsistent in quality. Where marking is effective pupils know what they have done well and what they might do to improve their work. However, not all marking is of this quality. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to consider teachers' comments and correct their errors. This hampers their progress.
- Pupils' learning in lessons is sometimes disrupted by a small minority of pupils who are not always fully involved in their learning because their work lacks challenge or is too mundane to hold their interest. A few pupils, therefore, become restless, lack focus and their concentration drifts. This results in some low-level disruptive behaviour, which slows learning. Occasionally, pupils are distracted by other groups working nearby; consequently their learning and progress suffers because the disturbances are not always dealt with quickly enough.
- Improvements in the teaching of reading are beginning to lead to better standards. However, the teaching of writing is still too weak to raise standards quickly. The teaching of spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting is too variable. Pupils continue to make too many errors in their written work.
- In mathematics, pupils underachieve because the work provided lacks challenge, especially for the most able. Conversely work provided for less able pupils is sometimes too difficult. Teaching does not ensure that pupils are able to recall important number facts quickly and use this knowledge to solve word problems successfully.
- The quality of support from teaching assistants is too variable. While assistants often provide helpful support when pupils work on activities in small groups, too often they miss opportunities to provide support, challenge and encouragement. Consequently pupils often lose interest and their progress is poor.
- Where teachers plan interesting work that captures pupils' attention and ask probing questions that promote lively discussions, pupils learn well. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils worked enthusiastically on games involving their times tables. Teaching was fast paced; just the right level of challenge for the pupils' varying abilities and consequently, learning was good.
- Teachers have started to make better use of information they have about what pupils know and can do to plan future learning but this is yet to lead to better progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the indoor classroom is stimulating, attractive and used well to promote good learning. However, the large outdoor space is not used effectively. Therefore, opportunities for children to progress well and develop their skills across the various areas of learning, while working outdoors, are too limited.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because pupils' attitudes to learning are not always good, especially where work lacks challenge or fails to maintain their interest.

Although in lessons most pupils behave well, in some there are instances of low-level disruption by a small minority of pupils, which slows the pace of their learning and that of others.

- At the start of lessons, some pupils are slow to settle; this wastes valuable learning time. Although most pupils are attentive, listening eagerly, a few are not. Pupils acknowledge that a small minority of their classmates let them down because of their 'wrong attitudes'. However, behaviour is improving. The number of letters sent to parents to express concerns about behaviour has substantially reduced. Higher expectations are now placed on staff to manage and support positive behaviour at all times.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that visitors to school, such as the police, help them know how to keep safe. Older pupils have a good understanding about the different forms of bullying. Younger pupils have a good knowledge about the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol although those spoken to only vaguely remembered the important e-safety messages they had been taught previously.
- Attendance has been below average but has recently shown some early signs of improvement and is now in line with national average. Between September 2013 and the inspection, attendance was much higher than during the same period last year. The proportion of pupils who are absent regularly has reduced significantly. Leaders are focusing strongly on improving attendance to ensure these improvements are maintained.
- The breakfast club provides a healthy and welcoming start to the day. Pupils arrive at school on time.
- Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities, such as being members of the school council, or acting as reading buddies or play leaders. They talk excitedly about their duties.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is well developed. Displays throughout the school show that it is promoted well. Pupils have a good knowledge of other faiths and cultures as well as their own.
- The school is tidy throughout. Most pupils wear their uniforms with pride. At lunchtimes pupils enjoy chatting with their friends as they make their healthy food choices.

The leadership and management

are inadequate

- The school's effectiveness has declined since the last inspection. Leaders have not acted quickly enough to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. Over the last three years, there have been many staff changes, including in senior leadership, resulting in too little accountability and a lack of urgency to move the school on.
- The leadership of teaching is ineffective. Arrangements to manage the performance of staff, have only recently been put into place. Staff have not been held sufficiently to account for the quality of their teaching and for pupils' achievement which is therefore too low. Senior leaders have only recently taken steps to check the quality of teaching and coach staff to improve their practice.
- Leaders have made a start on improving the arrangements for assessing pupils' achievements but these changes are too recent to have had an impact on pupils' achievement.
- The pace of change has been too slow. The temporary headteacher is leading improvements. With support from senior leaders and governors, the temporary headteacher has accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. Her clear passion and commitment to get the very best from pupils have won the support of staff. Staff are keen to play their part in school improvement. However, many systems for checking the school's work are not embedded. There is no clear evidence that the leaders are able to make the necessary improvements rapidly and able to sustain them without external support.
- Action plans for improvement are in place but have yet to secure the necessary improvements to tackle the legacy of underachievement. Leaders are yet to raise the quality of teaching to a good enough standard. Middle leaders, including those responsible for leading specific subjects, have not contributed sufficiently to improving teaching and learning. They are starting to do so but they do not have a clear picture of the quality of teaching or how well pupils learn in various

subjects.

- Actions taken by the local authority to support the school to improve have been ineffective. However, a local authority advisor is now working alongside the temporary headteacher in order to bring about the changes required to improve the school. This partnership is effective and has contributed successfully to the improvements made so far.
- The curriculum is enhanced through extra-curricular clubs, a number of visits and visitors. During the inspection, small and exciting animals were brought to the Early Years Foundation Stage. The children's fathers were also invited along and the experience was enjoyed by all. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum subjects are still overlooked.
- The new primary school physical education and sport funding is used well to enhance the quality of sport. It helps to provide physical activities during lunchtimes and after-school specialist coaching. This is helping pupils to lead more healthy lifestyles and improve their physical well-being.
- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Following the letter from Her Majesty's Inspector's monitoring visit in June 2013, many governors resigned. The letter identified that governors had not sufficiently challenged the school and consequently there had been a lack of urgency in responding to findings of the March 2013 inspection. The local authority and the archdiocese have worked together to recruit new governors and a stronger and knowledgeable governing body is now in place. An effective partnership now exists between leaders and governors, who are particularly well involved in day-to-day school life. Governors now have a good understanding of the nationally published information showing the school's performance in comparison with other schools. Governors acknowledge that information provided by leaders about pupils' achievement and teaching is improving. This means that they are getting a better view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the performance of different groups of pupils. This has led to more effective challenge of the leadership by governors as to how well pupils are learning and whether their outcomes are improving quickly enough. Governors are making a better contribution to improving teaching and are tackling underperformance more rigorously. Governors are now giving more attention to the management of teachers' performance and review teachers' pay accordingly. They are clear that future pay awards will be allocated only where it is evident that pupils have done well. Governors have yet to ensure that leaders improve teaching so that it is good enough to raise standards quickly.
- Governors have acted swiftly to enhance the indoor learning environment, to ensure finances are allocated where needed most and to improve resources. This is helping to promote better achievement. Governors are starting to check on the impact of the pupil premium funding. They know that its use is starting to help raise the achievement of eligible pupils, but that further work is needed before the full impact will be felt.
- Governors carry out their statutory responsibilities well, including ensuring safeguarding arrangements are met.

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	104632
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	432130

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	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John McCormack
Headteacher	Sandra Hamilton
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2013
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