

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Conwy Court, Castlefields, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2JJ

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Middle leadership is underdeveloped, particularly in leading improvements in some subjects.
- The school's plans for improvement lack measurable milestones that enable leaders and governors to check that plans are working.
- Although improving, teaching is not consistently good. In some lessons, what teachers expect of pupils is not always clear. This means pupils sometimes lose interest. Adults' use of questioning is not always effective. Teachers' guidance on how pupils should improve their work is not always sharply focused.
- Although attendance is improving, there are still a number of families whose children's attendance is not good enough.
- Governors do not ensure that the information available to parents on the school's website is up to date.
- Too few pupils make the progress needed to reach the higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. Girls do not do as well as boys in mathematics.
- Not all pupils in Key Stage 1 reach the nationally expected levels of attainment for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have brought about improvements in the quality of teaching and achievement.
- Provision in the Early Years is good. Children now make rapid progress and get a good start to their school life because of the improvements in leadership and teaching.
- Pupils are polite, welcoming and nearly always eager to learn. Pupils feel safe and are respectful of each other and adults and are proud of their school.
- Effective actions are improving standards in reading and phonics, particularly in Key Stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of 10 lessons, including those in which pupils were being taught about how letters in words represent different sounds (phonics).
- Discussions were held with members of staff, groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and with two representatives of the local authority.
- A range of documentation was examined, particularly that related to keeping pupils safe, and their behaviour and attendance.
- The school's tracking of pupils' progress was checked and pupils' work in books was examined.
- The inspector took note of displays around the school and examples of pupils at work which had been recorded electronically.
- The inspector listened to pupils read from all Key Stages.
- The inspector took note of 14 replies made to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector analysed 4 returns by staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Nixon, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This small school is below the average in size for a primary school.
- Nearly all pupils are White British, but a small proportion comes from a variety of minority ethnic groups. These include a variable number of pupils from a traveller background who temporarily register and attend the school for short periods of time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and therefore supported by the pupil premium is well above average and forms the majority of pupils attending the school. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils looked after by the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who have been adopted from care.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, who are supported at school action, is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- There have been significant changes to staffing since the last inspection. The headteacher and all teachers are new to the school since the last inspection.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club for its own pupils.
- The school is anticipating conversion to academy status shortly and expects to join a multi-academy trust sponsored by the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more pupils make better than the progress expected of them to reach the higher standards of attainment by:
 - improving the systematic teaching of mathematics skills so that all pupils, especially girls, can apply them effectively to improve their progress and attainment in the subject
 - sharpen the focus of guidance given in marking and ensure that teachers give sufficient opportunities for pupils to use it to make their work better, ensuring that all lessons and activities contain high learning expectations and clearly explained expected outcomes
 - ensure that all teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively to probe, challenge and develop pupils' understanding to best effect in all subjects.
- Improve the Leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that action plans have clear, measurable outcomes by which governors can check that they are working
 - further developing the role of middle leaders in school, sharpening their analysis of the impact of their actions on pupils' learning and enhancing their skills to enable them to drive forward improvements
 - ensuring that governors provide up-to-date information for parents on the school's website.
- Improve the attendance of pupils at school by continuing to rigorously pursue, by all appropriate means, families who stop their children regularly attending school.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because teaching is not good enough over time. As a result, pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.
- Senior leaders and some middle leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The headteacher demonstrates the tenacity and determination to bring about the change that is still required. The capacity to improve is clear.
- Leaders plan appropriate actions for improvement. However, their plans lack the measurable milestones from which governors can make accurate checks that they are working and on track to reach their intended outcomes.
- Senior leaders have a clear focus on the impact of teaching on learning. They use a range of evidence including observations, progress data and scrutiny of work in pupils' books to make accurate judgements about how well the school is doing.
- Middle leadership is underdeveloped and its quality inconsistent. Consequently middle leaders make only a limited contribution to leading improvement. Senior leaders are aware of this and are taking appropriate actions to secure improvement. Where middle leadership is stronger, such as in the Early Years, leaders have a secure understanding of strengths and weaknesses and lead effective actions to drive further improvement; for example, developing links with the pre-school to improve children's readiness for school.
- Performance management is thorough. It now holds teachers to account for the achievement of pupils. Targets are clear, linked directly to the outcomes for pupils and the Teachers' Standards and used by senior leaders and governors to inform judgements on teachers' pay progression.
- Leaders' attentions have been correctly focused on improving pupils' access to learning through the development of successful phonics and reading programmes. However, they have maintained a curriculum that is broad and that interests pupils and prepares them for their next stages of learning. Mock elections, for example, enhance pupils' understanding of British values and the rule of law. In addition, the introduction of student safety officers develops understanding of responsibility.
- Provision for pupils' social, moral and cultural development is good. The school has a well developed ethos of caring and cultural understanding and tolerance. Pupils are taking on more responsibilities across the school through, for example, the new roles of head boy and girl. Pupils speak of the interesting assemblies that are held in school and visitors, including local police officers, who keep children informed about being safe.
- The school uses the additional sport funding effectively. A sports coach provides expert tuition for pupils while also training staff to sustain the delivery of high quality sports teaching. Links with a local secondary school partnership enable additional sports clubs to be run. Consequently more pupils are now engaged in sport and are developing healthier lifestyles.
- The school engages well with parents through regular newsletters and prolific texting. Regular information meetings, such as to introduce homework, and phonics are held and parent/teacher meetings are extremely well attended. While a small number of parents said they would like to be better informed about their children's progress, the large majority of parents expressed support for the school and would recommend it to other parents.
- Local authority support and challenge for school improvement has been effective in helping the school make sufficient improvements. Officers have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Alongside the Diocese of Shrewsbury, they are working to ensure a smooth transition to academy status.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive of the school and are aware of its strengths and weaknesses in achievement and the quality of teaching. However, they are too reliant on information provided by the senior leadership team and do not regularly check the validity of the information they receive.
 - Governors recognise the need to continue to improve standards by holding leaders to account and, with training and support, are now better placed to do so. Some visit the school regularly and some ask challenging questions regarding staffing and achievement.
 - Governors manage finances well and use them effectively. They are aware of how pupil premium funding is used and regularly ask about the impact it is having on eligible pupils, including closing gaps in reading and improving attendance.
 - Governors ensure that the school currently meets safeguarding requirements.
 - Governors do not ensure that the information available to parents on the school's website is up to date

and meets national requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because in some lessons pupils become disengaged, slowing the pace of their learning. This is because pupils are not always clear about what they are to do.
- Pupils' attendance is below average. Persistent absence is higher than that found nationally. However, attendance is improving because of the robust actions taken by school leaders. These include the appointment of an attendance officer who visits homes and local traveller sites to check on children who are absent. In addition, the school has made judicious use of fixed penalty fines.
- Around the school and at play times pupils show respect for each other and show courtesy to adults. They demonstrate the caring ethos of the school by the way they look after each other. Older pupils, for example, help those new to the school or when accidents or 'fall outs' occur. The few incidents of unacceptable behaviour are effectively dealt with by appropriately trained staff.
- Pupils' pride in their work is improving due to the focused support of teachers and the regular teaching of handwriting.
- Bullying is rare because of the actions taken by the school to educate pupils about it. Pupils are very aware of the different types of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying. Older pupils demonstrate good understanding of the impact such activities might have on others and understand that these will not be tolerated in their learning community.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. This results in a safe and secure environment which supports good attitudes to behaviour. Teachers are well trained in child protection and take their roles seriously. Consequently, pupils say they feel safe and trust teachers and other adults to help them if they have a problem.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are on the Internet, because of effective teaching in lessons and at other times. Appropriate visitors are used effectively to help keep pupils safe and develop their understanding about risks, such as those posed from drugs and alcohol.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has been too variable. As a result, pupils have not always achieved as well as they could. However, the quality of teaching is rapidly improving. All inadequate teaching has been eliminated. Pupils are better engaged in their learning and the more-able pupils receive greater levels of challenge. Teaching is strongest in the Early Years.
- Teachers do not always check closely that their teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teaching assistants are not always sharply deployed to give pupils the best support. Adults' questioning lacks depth and rigour and is often linked to an overeagerness to give answers and show how things are done. Teachers' guidance on how pupils should improve their work is not sharp enough and its impact is not checked. In addition, some pupils do not make as much progress as they should in some lessons, because teachers do not make clear what is expected of them, leading to them becoming distracted.
- Some teaching makes creative use of links to real-life situations that engage and stimulate pupils. Well planned and clearly structured activities mean pupils, including the more able, are challenged and understand what is expected of them. Probing questions draw out pupils' reasoning and develop their understanding. Teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge is strong and used effectively to help pupils improve.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are effectively taught, particularly in Key Stage 2. This results in pupils making faster progress and reaching the levels of attainment expected for their age. However, in some lessons, particularly so in Key Stage 1, pupils' skills are not systematically developed quickly enough to enable them to make up ground.
- The teaching of phonics and reading has been strengthened. This has led to rapidly improving standards in spelling and reading.
- Pupils read widely and often, and are developing a keen interest in books. This is because of the increased importance placed upon reading by leaders and teachers.
- There are regular occasions when teachers benefit from the expertise of others. Teachers and teaching assistants meet regularly to share information relating to pupil progress. Specialist language teaching is improving pupils' skills in Spanish, while a sports coach is extending teachers' skills in physical education.

and sport. Additionally, links with a local teaching school are effective in improving the quality of teaching through the sharing of expertise.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Nearly all children enter the Early Years with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. Children's skills in communication, language and literacy and those related to mathematical understanding are generally poor. Despite this, by the time children move into Year 1, over two thirds, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, make rapid progress to reach a good level of development.
- In the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2013, pupils of all groups, including those for whom English is an additional language, achieved levels below those seen nationally. However, pupils are strongly improving their skills at linking letters to sounds and improving carrying these skills forward into their writing to aid spelling.
- Achievement is not as good in Key Stage 1 as in other parts of the school. Attainment in 2013 and 2014 remains below national averages. However, from their low starting points pupils now make the progress expected of them. Current school data show the rates of progress across the key stage are improving in reading, writing and mathematics. Work in books in Key Stage 1 show that assessment is now accurate and standards are improving because of better quality teaching and greater scrutiny by leaders.
- In Key Stage 2, the progress of all pupils, including those who are most able, is improving and are at least in line with expectations. This is because of the improving quality of the teaching they receive and the focus on providing equal opportunities for all.
- By the time pupils leave Year 6, most are ready for their next phase of education. Overall, attainment in mathematics, reading, writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling has improved greatly and is in line with that found nationally. In mathematics and writing pupils are in line with the national picture while in reading, they are one term behind. Girls attain less well than boys, particularly in mathematics. In 2014 the proportions of pupils reaching levels of attainment expected for their age is in line with the national picture.
- The proportion of pupils making the progress expected of them in reading is well above that seen nationally; in mathematics and writing it is in line. Although the proportions of those making better than expected progress is below the national picture, it is improving strongly. Disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium have closed the in-school attainment gap with non-disadvantaged pupils and now make at least as good progress in reading and writing, but slightly less so in mathematics. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining the expected levels for their age in 2014 was above that seen nationally for reading and in line with the national picture for writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs make effective progress due to the quality of targeted support and newly introduced setted work groups for phonics and reading.
- Over time there have been no pupils identified as being of high ability.
- There are a variable number of pupils from a traveller background who attend the school intermittently and often for short periods of time. More effective tracking by senior leaders now enables the school to show that these pupils do well and make similar progress to that of their peers when they are attending.

The early years provision

is good

- What is provided in the Early Years is good. Because of the good quality of leadership and teaching it now gives children a good start to their school life. It is not yet outstanding because adults working with children are sometimes too keen to direct and lead, giving answers instead of using questioning to stimulate further learning.
- Children from all groups, including those who are eligible for pupil premium funding, enter the Early Years with levels of development that are below those and significantly below those expected for their age and make rapid progress so that over two thirds leave with a good level of development.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are applied with the same rigour that is seen in the rest of the school.
- Leaders are not complacent; actions to improve teaching and resources lead to children engaging in activities that promote learning in a vibrant environment. Good use is made of the outdoor facilities to engage children in their learning.

- Children are motivated learners because they have access to a wide range of activities covering the seven areas of learning, which are exciting and fun. These activities often have a common focus and build upon the structured teaching of phonics and language and number skills. Some children for example, studying the story of the three little pigs, were excited to be able to build their own 'pig' houses outside, while others were enacting the story or developing their fine motor skills drawing pictures of the pigs.
- Because of meticulous record-keeping and much improved assessment that is accurate, teachers and teaching assistants are able to plan activities and appropriate interventions resulting in children receiving the support they need both from in school and from outside agencies.
- Good relationships have been established with parents who are well informed about their children's education by regular newsletters, notice boards, information leaflets, meetings and text messaging.
- Leaders recognise the importance of addressing the low levels of development on entry and are working in close partnership with the on-site independent preschool to develop children's 'school readiness'.

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	111359
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	451803

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Penny
Headteacher	Bernadette Galloway
Date of previous school inspection	29 February 2012
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