

St Anne's Catholic Primary School

Monastery Lane, Sutton, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3SP

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is good. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons and over time.
- By the end of Year 6, attainment in mathematics, reading and writing is above average. Pupils' progress from their various starting points is good overall.
- Carefully tailored support for pupils with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils enables them to make good progress and to participate fully in activities.
- Children make outstanding progress in the early years, as a result of outstanding teaching and an exciting environment which interests and encourages them to learn.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and their conduct is impeccable. Attendance is above average. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, enjoy coming to school and have very good relationships with each other and with adults. They feel safe in school.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, strongly supported by the senior leadership team and governors, provides clear direction and has overall sustained and, in some aspects, improved pupils' good achievement and the effectiveness of teaching. The outstanding promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables them to thrive in a very supportive learning community.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Work is not always precisely enough matched to pupils' needs and capabilities so that some pupils, particularly those of middle ability, do not always reach their full potential.
- Pupils are not always given the precise guidance they need to improve their work, particularly the accuracy of their spelling, and are not always given the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments.
- Some subject and middle leaders are in the early stages of developing their roles. They are not yet fully involved in improving teaching and learning in their subjects. The information gained from the school's monitoring is not used as effectively as it might be to identify areas for further improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons and made short visits to other activities, such as guided reading, phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) lessons and small group and one-to-one support led by teachers and trained assistants. Three of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and assistant headteacher. They also visited specific areas of the outdoor learning environment.
- Two groups of pupils met with inspectors and inspectors talked informally to a wide range of pupils. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior leaders. Meetings were conducted with governors the Chair of the Governing Body and with representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as 24 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work with the headteacher and two assistant headteachers and read a range of documents. These included documents about the school's strategies to enable leaders to gain an accurate view of its performance, school improvement plans, pupils' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Melvyn Hemmings	Additional Inspector
Jean Tarry	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Anne's Catholic Primary School is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language are very low.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority), is higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is higher than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes in staff; several new teachers have joined the school. The headteacher and two assistant headteachers took up their posts in September 2014.
- The early years provision consists of Reception and full-time Nursery classes.
- The school has a number of awards, including Healthy School status, the school's Eco award and the Early Years Quality award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently outstanding across the school and thereby raise standards and further increase pupils' rates of progress by:
 - making sure tasks are always set at just the right level and that pupils, especially those of middle ability, are consistently challenged, to achieve the best they can
 - ensuring pupils are always given the precise guidance they need to improve their work, especially their writing and the accuracy of their spelling
 - ensuring pupils are given the time to respond to teachers' comments.
- Further develop the roles of subject and middle leaders in improving teaching and learning by:
 - involving them fully in all monitoring and evaluation procedures and involving them more in working alongside teachers in order to spread best practice
 - using assessment information effectively to identify areas for improvement in teaching and learning in their subjects and across the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, strongly supported by the senior leadership team, has an accurate view of what the school does well and what needs to be improved. This evaluation is based upon well-established and regular monitoring procedures which check the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. Monitoring procedures effectively hold teachers to account and identify training needs, and leaders provide teachers, including newly qualified teachers, with appropriate support.
- However, the headteacher, senior leaders and some middle leaders have only taken up their posts very recently and so some are still in the process of developing their roles. Other subject and middle leaders are not yet fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning procedures or in driving improvement in their subjects across the wider curriculum.
- Pupil premium funding is used to good effect to support disadvantaged pupils. This contributes well to the good progress these pupils make. Similarly, the primary sports funding is used to good effect to improve the quality of teaching in physical education across the school and to enrich pupils' experience in extra-curricular activities.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets pupils' needs and aspirations well and prepares them well for citizenship in modern Britain. It enables them to practise their mathematical, reading and writing skills in a variety of contexts while allowing them to develop their expertise, for example, as historians and scientists. The curriculum is enriched by themed days, music and drama, as well as a variety of trips, including residential, which extend pupils' learning beyond the classroom. Pupils' experience is also enhanced by specialist teaching in Spanish and in sports. The school also uses the outdoor area to good effect to widen pupils' experience and learning.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet government requirements.
- The school has been successful in actively encouraging parents to be involved in the school's work and their children's learning through regular meetings, workshops, newsletters and the school's website. Attendance has improved and it is now above average. Persistent absence has decreased.
- The school is committed to ensuring all pupils have equality of opportunity to succeed and to this end works well with outside agencies and parents to remove barriers to learning.
- The school has received good support from the local authority through a period of change. It has provided support to improve the skills of governors. The school has also benefitted from support from consultants and through training courses to improve teaching, learning and leadership skills amongst its staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas which need to be improved. Its members have undertaken training in interpreting data and regularly check the school's performance, including pupils' attainment and progress. Governors are able to talk confidently about the achievement of different groups of pupils.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and the performance of staff, including how good performance is rewarded and any underperformance is tackled. The efficiency of spending is scrutinised, for example, the effectiveness of the use of primary sports and pupil premium funding.
 - Governors are involved in the life of the school and meet regularly with senior leaders. As a result they are able, through challenge and support, to hold leaders to account and set targets for further improvement. Governors have supported the school effectively during a period of considerable change and ensured the school has remained stable.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous and considerate to each other, and work and play very well together. Their conduct in lessons and around the school is impeccable. They take responsibility very seriously and are proud of their contribution to the school, for example, as school councillors and as house captains.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and that learning is fun. They say that they particularly enjoy the themed days and the opportunities they have to take part in drama and participate in trips.
- Pupils come to lessons equipped and ready to work. They take pride in their school and take care of their classrooms and playground. They work responsibly and with enthusiasm. They support each other well, for example, when working with a partner or in small groups. They listen carefully to others and respect

each other's opinions. They relish opportunities to explain their views or demonstrate how they have solved problems and do so clearly and confidently.

- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and are keen to do well. However, pupils do not always have opportunities to respond to teachers' comments about how to improve their work and then decide for themselves how to make their work better. As a result, they do not always learn from their mistakes and at times this impeded their progress.
- Pupils who may have challenging behaviour are supported very effectively to make good choices and, as a result, they are able to learn effectively and make good progress alongside their classmates. Incidences of poor behaviour are very rare.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils have very good relationships with adults and with each other. Pupils feel safe and are confident that any poor behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively. They are aware of the different forms of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber-bullying that can take place and know very well how to deal with any.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They are enthusiastic about the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, that are provided and which have a positive impact on their health and well-being.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good across the school and there are examples of outstanding practice.
- All pupils, even the youngest in the early years, are given frequent opportunities to work together in small groups and to discuss their ideas with a partner. As a result, they grow in confidence in explaining their ideas to others as they move through the school. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and ask pupils searching questions to see how much they have understood and to challenge them further.
- Pupils respond enthusiastically to the frequent opportunities to work together to solve problems or to explore ideas for themselves. For instance, pupils from Years 3 and 4 were completely absorbed in working out for themselves how to set up a simple electrical circuit; many were excited to discover the relationship between the number of batteries in the circuit to the brightness of the bulbs they were using and explained this to the rest of the class.
- Activities are usually effectively designed to capture pupils' interest and, as a result, pupils display high levels of concentration in lessons. Pupils in Year 6 were very keen to solve mathematical problems based on their reading of *Macbeth*, for example, deciding how to work out the amount of time, Macbeth spent with the witches and completing calculations, which included subtraction, with confidence. Activities are usually well matched to pupils' needs but, although the most able are regularly challenged to achieve their potential, there is scope to provide more challenge for pupils of middle ability. Lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs are given effective help but this is usually direct support from teachers and trained assistants. As a result, on occasion, the progress of these pupils is slowed while they wait for this support from adults.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and there are examples of outstanding practice. Where this is the case information gained from marking about pupils' progress determines their next steps. However, pupils do not always respond to teachers' comments or the extra challenges they set. Pupils do not always receive the precise guidance they need to help them improve their work, particularly their handwriting and the accuracy of their spelling. As a result, although they make good progress in their understanding and the content of their writing is of a good standard, it is marred by inaccuracies in spelling or, especially in Years 1 and 2, difficulties with handwriting.
- Although pupils are involved in evaluating their own and each other's work they are not always given the time they need to put mistakes right or improve their work.
- Reading is taught effectively and even the youngest take pleasure in applying their knowledge of phonics to read and write words and simple sentences or read out what they have written. They are able to use reference books and the internet effectively to find and check information.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Every opportunity is taken to enable pupils to work together and make decisions, for example in house teams in 'Democracy' sessions. Pupils of all ages regularly discuss moral issues and take into account each other's views, for example, in order to decide the best way to stay safe and draw up a whole-school charter or to explore and demonstrate their understanding of the school mission statement 'Love to Learn' through art.

They particularly enjoy the opportunities they have to increase their understanding of cultures other than their own and to explore their own heritage in the local area and beyond.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The proportion of pupils making and exceeding the progress expected of them from their starting points compares favourably with national figures. Children enter Year 1 with skills and knowledge that are generally those typical for their age and are confident learners who are well prepared for the Key Stage 1 curriculum.
- Overall, pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. By the end of Year 6, standards in mathematics, reading and writing are above average. Standards dipped to broadly average in 2014 in mathematics and reading but were above average in writing. Nonetheless, pupils in this cohort made good progress from their starting points.
- Work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school. Their progress is sometimes slower in writing because they are not always given the guidance they need to improve their work, particularly the accuracy of their handwriting and spelling. Because of the emphasis upon developing pupils' speaking and listening skills from the outset, pupils throughout the school make particularly good progress in these aspects and are articulate and confident in explaining their views.
- Although in 2014 some of the most able pupils did not achieve the highest levels in mathematics or in writing, work seen during the inspection indicates that the most able pupils usually do make good progress from their starting points in mathematics, reading and writing, with more now set to reach the highest levels by the end of Year 6. However, there is scope to provide even more challenge for middle-ability pupils.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils write successfully for a variety of purposes and audiences, and use a good range of vocabulary and structures to do this. Pupils across the school are confident in writing in different styles.
- Progress in reading is good. Pupils of all ages are enthusiastic about their reading. Middle ability and the most able pupils in Years 2 and 3 are able to understand some complex texts, are able to make inferences and can explain some unfamiliar vocabulary using the context to help them. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, most pupils read a variety of texts with a good level of fluency and understanding. Most are able to talk in detail about what they have read and are keen to read more.
- Progress in mathematics is also good. Pupils routinely explain their thinking and demonstrate their working to others. They do this confidently and with increasing independence as they move through the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers as a result of the extra help they are given, according to need, in class and in groups
- The extra support the school provides using the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, such as extra help in the classroom and support from teaching assistants, enables these pupils to reach their targets and to make the same good progress as non-disadvantaged pupils in the school and nationally. In 2014 gaps appeared to widen between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and writing and other pupils in the school and nationally by the end of Year 6, and for some they were up to a year behind. However, many of these pupils also faced other challenges in terms of special educational needs or had joined the school towards the end of Key Stage 2. Assessment information and pupils' work indicate that these gaps in attainment have now closed.

The early years provision is outstanding

- Children make outstanding progress from their various starting points and achieve exceptionally well in the Nursery and Reception classes as a result of outstanding teaching. Many children start in the early years provision with skills that are significantly below those typical for their age. The vast majority achieve a good level of development on entry to Year 1. Children make equally swift progress in all areas of learning.
- Staff work closely with parents to involve them in their children's learning, for example, through open days and workshops. As a result of very well-established routines and highly effective procedures for making sure their transition from home or pre-school settings is a smooth one, children settle in quickly, behave well and are aware of how to stay safe from the outset. They are used to routines, respond very positively to the high expectations of adults, take turns, increase in independence and learn and play well together.

They clearly enjoy activities provided for them, such as those provided in the natural environment around their school.

- The provision is led and managed exceptionally well. Adults work together very effectively to ensure all children are able to make good progress and activities are very well organised to meet individual needs, to capture children's interest and to enable them to make very swift progress.
- Adults monitor individual progress very closely on a daily basis and use this information very effectively to plan next steps for children's learning. Procedures for sharing this information are highly effective. They take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and to extend their learning. The result of the emphasis on developing children's language and communication skills from the outset is evident in their growing confidence in explaining their views as they move up through the school.
- Activities are planned very well and designed to interest and encourage children to take the initiative and to help them to develop their skills. Activities are purposeful, change regularly and reflect themes in teaching and children's interests very closely. Children thoroughly enjoy their learning; they are absorbed in activities and are very keen to join in. They listen attentively and display high levels of concentration.
- Despite the lack of equipment, staff make the most of the outdoor area to provide lots of opportunities which excite children's interest to explore and investigate; these children do so with enthusiasm. There are robust procedures in place to ensure children's safety, health and well-being.

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	104805
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	448289

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	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Knowles
Headteacher	Paul Swift
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2010
Telephone number	01744 671909
Fax number	01744 671916
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