

St Brigid's Catholic Primary School

Waterpark Drive, Stockbridge Village, Liverpool, L28 7RE

Inspection dates 17–18 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- Too few pupils make or exceed the progress that is expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The strong progress that children make during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not sustained or built upon when they move into Key Stage 1.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school, with some teachers not having high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils do not always achieve all that they are capable of.
- The checks that leaders undertake are not always used to the best effect to accurately identify and tackle weaknesses in teaching.
- Governors do not always focus sharply enough on pupils' achievement and do not challenge leaders often enough to explain the impact of their actions to improve the quality of teaching.
- Some teachers do not always check that pupils have acted upon their marking or feedback or follow up its impact in subsequent work to ensure they make progress.
- Some teachers do not make the best use of other adults to support pupils to achieve as well as they are capable.

The school has the following strengths

- From starting points that are significantly below those expected, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a flying start that ensures they are well prepared for their transition into Key Stage 1.
- Pupils feel safe and happy as a result of senior leader's actions to ensure that pupils, including the most vulnerable, receive the social and emotional support they need.
- Strong leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage results in any underachievement being addressed quickly, impacting positively on children's achievement.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities are well supported and consequently develop well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in each class of the school, including one joint observation with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, groups of pupils, five representatives of the governing body, a representative of Knowlsey local authority and a telephone meeting was held with a representative of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime, lunch and before and after school. They also met formally with a small group of pupils to discuss behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors heard a number of children read.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school and the work in the outdoor areas.
- The school's tracking of pupils' progress was examined alongside the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents at the start and end of the school day, including a meeting at the request of a parent. There were insufficient responses logged on Parent View, the online questionnaire, for inspectors to analyse. Inspectors, however, took note of the 98 responses to the school's recent parent questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Bell, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Nixon

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- There is an on-site breakfast club that is run by the school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage; the proportion of pupils for whom English is not or believed not to be their first language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is over double the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above the national 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 by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of all teaching across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 so that it is at least good or better by:
 - making sure that all teachers use questioning effectively to improve pupils' reasoning skills and deepen their knowledge and understanding of subjects
 - ensuring that teachers systematically check on the progress that pupils make during lessons so they more quickly identify when pupils are going wrong and take the best actions to help them
 - making sure that work planned for pupils builds upon their prior learning and is well matched to their different abilities
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are utilised consistently well across the school to support learning.
- Raise pupils' achievement in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 so that they make the best progress possible so that by the time they leave the school, the proportion of pupils who make expected and above expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics is at least in line with national averages.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - robustly and frequently checking that actions taken are having a rapid enough impact on improving teaching and raising achievement
 - holding teachers more robustly to account for the progress that pupils make by ensuring that performance management targets are sharp and measurable
 - further developing the school improvement plan so that it includes success criteria that are measurable and closely linked to improving the quality of teaching and raising the achievement of pupils
 - ensuring governors are more proactive in challenging the headteacher to check the impact of change and the effectiveness of actions.

An external review of governance should be undertaken so that this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

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 management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher and senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas in need of development. They know that in the past they have not been diligent or challenging enough to address underachievement. There is now, however, a renewed determination to take action to strengthen the quality of teaching and improve achievement which is leading to rapid improvements.
- The introduction in September of more robust pupil progress meetings is paying dividends as teachers are held to greater account, resulting in accelerated progress for most groups of pupils. Leaders, however, do not always focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils during these meetings.
- Procedures for managing the performance of teachers are now robust and hold teachers to account. Targets, however, are not yet precise enough and do not always focus on the things that are important to improve progress and help children reach their full potential.
- The senior leadership has a plan for development that accurately identifies the need to further improve the quality of teaching and achievement. Actions have been implemented and are making a difference. For example, the use by teaching staff of assessment tracking systems focuses teachers' attention and resources on pupils that are not making enough progress. Success criteria, however, are not always concise or measurable; consequently, governors cannot always judge if they are on track to improve things quickly enough.
- English and mathematics curriculum leaders accurately monitor the quality of work in pupils' books. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of which areas of their subjects need further improvement, including the quality and use of feedback given to pupils on how to improve their work and the need to further develop opportunities to apply writing skills across other subjects. Their efforts to improve teaching are hampered because they do not have enough opportunities to observe the quality of teaching and lead improvements, particularly in English.
- Middle leaders' roles in improving the school are not fully developed or consistent across different curriculum areas. Where they are strongest, for instance in the Early Years Foundation Stage, decisive action has resulted in rapidly improving achievement for children. Senior leaders are aware of this area for improvement and are investing resources in supporting these staff.
- Leaders' attentions have been focused on raising achievement in mathematics and literacy. They have maintained, however, a broad and rich curriculum which prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Equality of opportunity is actively promoted through subject topics, trips, assemblies and visitors.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children work hard to raise money for a number of charities including two local hospices. Pupils develop a good understanding of British values and law, for instance they hold elections to vote for members of the school council, including house captains, and are encouraged to think about what makes a great pupil leadership team by completing questionnaires. Spiritual understanding is deepened through the study of different world faiths such as Judaism. Artists such as Van Gogh are studied and inspire the design of high-quality ceramic tile designs. A poignant Remembrance display in the school entrance celebrates members of the school community, past and present who have served in the military and theatres of war and support the school's development of pupils' understanding of right from wrong and the value of freedom of speech.
- Primary physical education (PE) and sports funding is used well to support pupils' participation in sport and develop their well-being. Specialist coaches provide a range of extra-curricular sporting activities and high-quality professional development for staff. School leaders also ensure that pupils have many opportunities to participate and compete in a wide range of inter-school competitions, notably last year the football team proudly progressed to the semi-final of a nationwide competition.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from a wide range of extra support. The appointment of extra teaching assistants and the introduction of assertive mentoring lead to some pupils making good progress. Leaders', including governors' checking of the impact of this funding has not always been sharp enough, meaning that its effectiveness has been variable.
- The school's leaders, including governors welcome the local authority's increased level of support that has been offered to the school this year. As a result, the headteacher is more confident in tackling teacher underperformance and is developing a more effective distributed leadership that is empowering and developing middle leaders in their leadership roles.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed, eager to do their best and are uncompromising in their support of the headteacher and staff of the school. The governors meet their statutory duties and ensure they are particularly well informed about safeguarding.

- Governors display astute financial acumen and have steered the school from a substantial deficit budget into its current positive financial position.
- Governors have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses over time and are clear about what needs to improve. The information provided to them by the headteacher, however, is not used well enough to challenge the leadership about the impact of actions taken to address pupils' underachievement, particularly for those who are disadvantaged.
- Governors have an overview of performance management and understand how it impacts on teachers pay progression.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' good attitudes to learning and a well-established ethos of courtesy and respect result in pupils who are well behaved and eager to learn. Pupils go out of their way to make visitors to the school feel welcome and confidently and articulately instigate polite conversations.
- A small minority of pupils become disengaged in some lessons where expectations of what they can achieve are too low.
- Children talk with pride about their school and are happy to attend because of the teachers who they say 'help them and who are friendly'. Adults convey high expectations of behaviour to pupils and encourage children to resolve their own conflicts through restorative approaches.
- Pupils' attendance is better than that seen nationally because of the effective actions of senior leaders to secure its improvement, for example, the employment of a 'learning mentor' and a 'parent mentor' who work with families and other agencies to raise community aspirations and ensure pupils attend regularly.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they are safe and are confident that adults in the school listen to them if they have any concerns. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and when they do occur teachers deal with it swiftly and follow it up appropriately. Parents agree, in a recent (October 2014) school questionnaire 96% of respondents stated that their child was not bullied or harassed.
- Senior leaders in the school are vigilant in recognising the dangers faced by pupils joining gangs or being drawn in to anti-social behaviour. To tackle this, a project that uses ex-military personnel, delivered to Year 5 (with an after-school club provided for Year 4) instils respect, discipline and confidence in to pupils. This project gives them strategies to deal with peer pressure that underpin these dangers.
- Pupils 'check in' with an allocated adult and are given a helping hand throughout the school day when they are in need of social or emotional support. This ensures they are safe and happy and that parents or carers are made aware of any additional concerns.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe, for instance when using the internet. The focus of a safety week each year helps to strengthen this understanding.
- Leaders are dogged in their determination to keep pupils safe and are prepared to escalate and share their concerns when appropriate actions have not been taken by other agencies in a timely manner.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time is not consistently good. Pupils' progress falters in some classes; therefore, they do not always attain the standards of which they are capable.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are too low. Work is not always planned to build upon pupils' prior learning and in some lessons teachers do not recognise when pupils are ready to be moved on because they do not check progress frequently enough. Some teachers' use of questioning is superficial and opportunities are often missed to extend their learning and deepen their subject knowledge.
- Teachers mark work regularly but the quality of marking and feedback is inconsistent. A new marking and feedback policy, however, has secured some improvements in the quality of marking, but all teachers are not yet applying this consistently in all subjects. Some feedback gives pupils mixed messages. For

instance, marking in one book criticises a pupil for wasting time and not producing enough work while also rewarding them with one house point. Teachers' feedback to pupils about how they can improve their work is sometimes too vague and pupils do not systematically follow up on the advice given. Some teachers do not check to see if pupils have subsequently applied their suggestions to their work.

- Some teaching assistants make valuable contributions to pupils' learning because their intervention is well planned. For example, a small group of less able pupils were adeptly supported during a mathematics lesson in Key Stage 1 to access word problems. Some teachers, however, do not always use the skills of additional adults to best effect, resulting in their contribution to pupils' achievement being limited in some lessons.
- Despite the shortcomings in some teaching, pupils are keen to learn. They display good attitudes because of the excellent relationships that all teachers have fostered over time. Teachers nurture pupils' confidence and as a result, pupils feel safe to volunteer answers without fear of being wrong. This helps teachers to identify misconceptions during lessons and adapt their plans as a result.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers use skilful questioning and well-planned, interesting and engaging activities to deepen pupils' understanding allowing them the freedom to apply their skills and make rapid progress. For instance, children in Year 2 developed their reasoning and investigative skills in a mathematics lesson where they had to find as many possible ways to make 29 pence using a variety of different coins. In some lessons pupils make good progress because their teachers draw on good subject knowledge to plan lessons that are imaginative, hook pupils' attention to build upon pupils' skills and knowledge. For example, in a Year 6 writing lesson pupils thoroughly enjoyed writing letters of complaint that expressed their dismay at appalling service in a hotel. As a consequence, their use of language and sentence structures improved markedly.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics has not been consistent enough to narrow the gaps from their starting points. Despite improvement in attainment in all subjects in 2014 at Key Stage 1, results remain below national averages, significantly so in reading. Nevertheless, there have been recent improvements in the teaching of reading and inspectors heard younger pupils reading with confidence and fluency.
- Progress across Key Stage 2 is variable with the proportion of pupils making expected and more than expected progress, particularly in writing being below the national average. Despite improvements in attainment in mathematics and writing, pupils left the school in 2014 nearly one and a half terms behind their peers nationally in mathematics, over two terms behind in reading and one term behind in writing.
- Current school data and evidence seen in books and during lessons confirm that there are significant improvements in progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school, with most cohorts of pupils making accelerated progress.
- The proportion of children reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been in decline. Boys and disadvantaged pupils' achievement has been significantly low compared to their peers in school and nationally. Improvements in the teaching of phonics, as well as intensive targeted support for identified pupils have resulted in the proportion of children currently on track to reach the expected standard to be broadly in line with the national average. Leaders have effectively used assessment data from the phonics screening test in 2014 to ensure that teaching addresses areas of phonological weakness. As a result, the vast majority of these pupils have made rapid progress and are now on track to reach the expected standard.
- Disadvantaged pupils, those supported by the pupil premium, progress and reach standards that are above their non-disadvantaged peers in school, particularly in reading where they leave school one and a half terms above their peers. They fare less favourably, however, in comparison to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Pupils left school in 2014 nearly two terms behind their non-disadvantaged peers nationally in mathematics, almost two and a half terms behind in reading and one and a half terms behind in writing.
- The most able pupils make expected progress. Action taken by the headteacher to raise the focus given to this group of pupils, in addition to improved challenge and raised expectations from teachers, has resulted in increased proportions of pupils leaving school in 2014 achieving the highest level in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who are known to have special educational needs make good progress in relation to their specific needs. Concise and frequent assessments by class teachers and the teacher responsible for this group of pupils ensure that those in need of support are identified at an early stage and work, or interventions are

tailored appropriately to their needs.

The early years provision

is good

- Children get off to a flying start as a result of strong leadership and good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children enter school with skills and knowledge below, with a high proportion significantly below that which is typical for their age, particularly in the area of communication and language. They make good progress over time with the proportion of children reaching a good level of development being similar to that seen nationally. The achievement of disadvantaged children compared to non-disadvantaged children nationally was broadly similar.
- Good quality teaching and thoughtfully planned provision, including the newly developed outdoor area captures and builds upon children's interests. For instance, children were inspired by the story of *The Three Little Pigs* to build houses and shelters that would protect them from the Big Bad Wolf while other children used the role-play area and masks to act out the story. The class teacher has high expectations of what children can achieve and through skilful questioning and planning develops good levels of independence and resilience.
- Children's social and emotional skills are nurtured and developed strongly. Children play alongside each other and with each other well; when problems do arise they are able to resolve disagreements among themselves with limited intervention from adults.
- Children behave well and are eager to learn because of well-established routines and high expectations that are set by teachers and teaching assistants. Children are kept safe by staff who are well trained and who are keenly aware of any potential risks.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The early years Leader has taken decisive action, based on detailed evaluations of outcomes, to amend provision so that the proportion of children on track to achieve a good level of development is now better than national averages. Records of observations and assessments of children are detailed and accurate and constantly inform planning and frequent changes to the indoor and outdoor learning environments.

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	104474
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	456138

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris O'Connor
Headteacher	Rachael Tyler
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2012
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