

St Christopher's Catholic Primary School

Tarbock Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L24 0SN

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and other senior staff lead with ambition and have high aspirations for pupils in the school. As a result of their purposeful actions, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils are well behaved, polite and respectful. They enjoy coming to school, are enthusiastic learners and work and play harmoniously together.
- All groups of pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics are improving rapidly. Achievement in sport is a particular strength of the school; pupils participate in a large number of competitions with considerable success.
- Children make a good start to their time in school in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Pupils say that the school keeps them safe. The proportion of pupils who are absent from school often has reduced significantly.
- The teaching of reading is a significant strength. Teachers help pupils to develop a love of books and a passion for reading permeates the whole-school community.
- Governors support and challenge the school leadership effectively, ensuring that improvements are sustained and have an impact on the quality of teaching.
- All parents who completed a survey strongly agree that they would recommend St Christopher's to other parents. Parents, pupils and staff are proud of their school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve are sometimes not high enough, resulting in some pupils not making as much progress as they could.
- Governors do not fully check on the impact of the external funding that the school receives for looked after children.
- Efforts to improve pupils' basic skills, particularly in spelling, have not been fully effective.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in each class of the school, including joint observations with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, groups of pupils, seven representatives of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority.
- 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, lunchtime and before and after school. They also met formally with a small group of pupils.
- 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 of the day. They considered the views of 16 parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

Martin Bell, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ian Hardman

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Wall

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- The school was judged to have serious weaknesses at its previous inspection in November 2013.
- St Christopher's Catholic Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary School.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by the pupil premium funding, is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- 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 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.
- There were no pupils at the time of the inspection educated off-site in alternative provision or with part-time timetables.
- The school has two full-time Reception classes and a part-time Nursery class which operates every day for a morning and an afternoon session.
- The school has a number of awards including: Artsmark Gold, the Reading Quality Mark and Investors in People.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that the governing body checks the impact of the external funding it receives for looked after children.
- Improve pupils' spelling skills and ensure that pupils apply these in their writing.
- Ensure that teachers plan work for the most able pupils that gives them a greater challenge and enables them to make even better progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders set high expectations and are aspirational for the pupils of the school. They have planned effectively and taken decisive actions that have steered the school on a journey of improvement since its last inspection.
- The senior leadership team have brought about rapid improvements to the quality of teaching across the school. They regularly check pupils' books, observe lessons and analyse information about the progress that pupils are making. They use this information astutely to identify aspects of teaching that can be better. Carefully-planned professional development opportunities for teachers, such as visiting other schools or attending training, ensure that identified areas are addressed and leaders robustly check that teaching improves as a consequence.
- Middle leaders have played a significant role in securing school improvements since the last inspection. They have ensured the new National Curriculum has been introduced smoothly and that teachers were well prepared for the changes that were required. Mathematics and English subject leaders know well the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects and accurately identify what needs to improve further. However, their action plans for improvement do not always clearly identify measurable outcomes that easily allow leaders and governors to know if their actions have been successful.
- The teacher who coordinates the school's work with pupils who have special educational needs provides strong leadership. She uses data effectively to track pupils' progress and ensure that resources, including the use of learning support assistants, are impacting positively on the achievement of this group of pupils.
- Senior leaders have been successful in narrowing the gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils within school and nationally through effective spending of pupil premium funding. They ensure that extra adult support is matched to the needs of pupils and that barriers to learning are tackled, including improving attendance at school.
- The primary school sport and physical education premium is a grant of money from the government to ensure a significant and lasting legacy following the 2012 Olympic Games. Sports leaders ensure that this funding is spent to have maximum impact on participation and achievement in sport at the school. Care is taken to employ specialist sports coaches of a high calibre. Teachers enhance their own skills by observing, and teaching alongside, the coaches. Participation in sport is high and all pupils are encouraged to lead a healthy and active lifestyle through having free membership to leisure centres across Liverpool. Large numbers of pupils take part in competitive sport and the school enjoys a great deal of success, competing at regional and national level and winning a substantial number of trophies.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The rich and diverse curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to find out about other faiths, for instance by visiting churches and synagogues. 'Immersion days,' such as one held in the spring term where all pupils studied the Chinese New Year, help pupils to understand and celebrate other cultures. Pupils' understanding of British values, such as democracy, is effectively promoted, for example, through pupils electing their own school councillors, some of who are members of the Liverpool Schools' Parliament, including one pupil who has been elected as Junior Lord Mayor of Liverpool.
- Senior leaders ensure that there is equal opportunity for all pupils to access the curriculum and that there is no discrimination in the school. Pupils and parents report that all children, irrespective of faith, gender, cultural or ethnic background, are safe within the school. Pupils from other countries who join the school settle quickly and are welcomed warmly by their peers in school.
- The policies and procedures for keeping children safe are effective and are given a high priority by senior leaders and the governing body. Checks to ensure that adults working in the school have been cleared to work with children are comprehensive and fully up to date. All staff have been trained in child protection procedures and systems are in place for recording concerns.
- The local authority has provided welcome and effective support that has contributed to school improvement since the last inspection. The local authority review in the autumn term was particularly effective in helping leaders clarify their actions for school improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to school improvement; they give generously of their time and share the same high expectations as the headteacher. They are supportive and challenging in equal measure, holding leaders to account to ensure actions result in improvements; as one member of the governing body explained 'we are an impact-led team'.
 - Governors ensure the efficient management of financial resources, enabling the deployment of support staff and teachers to have the greatest impact on pupils' achievement. They meet their statutory

obligations to keep pupils safe and confidently use a wide range of data to keep a close eye on the performance of pupils and the quality of teaching.

- Governors ensure that there is equality of opportunity for disadvantaged pupils within the school by carefully checking on how effective funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is at improving achievement. However, they do not check with the same robustness the impact that funding for looked after pupils is having on their achievement.
- Governors have a detailed understanding of the procedure for managing teachers' performance. They support and challenge the headteacher to ensure that good performance is rewarded and underperformance is tackled.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. An ethos of high expectation, respect and tolerance permeates the school. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and follow instructions without fuss or disruption. They are enthusiastic about their learning and enjoy tackling challenging work. However, when tasks do not match their abilities some pupils become easily distracted and display some immature behaviour.
- Pupils are proud of their school and of their work. They take care of the school environment and present work in their books to a high standard.
- Pupils work collaboratively in lessons to discuss their ideas and answer questions posed by their teachers. They speak to each other politely and show respect for the opinions of others, irrespective of faith, gender or culture. On the rare occasions that pupils do not get along, teachers quickly and appropriately intervene to ensure that there is little or no disruption to learning within the classroom.
- Pupils say that they 'love playtimes'. Behaviour on the playground during breaktime is calm as pupils play freely and respond positively to one another. There are good opportunities for pupils to play actively but there are also quieter areas on the playground. One pupil told inspectors that 'the quiet area is my favourite place because I can sit and talk with my friends.'

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils, parents and teachers overwhelmingly say that children are safe in school. Behaviour logs confirm that serious incidents, including bullying or the use of racist language are extremely rare.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and know who they can report any concerns to within school. A 'safety week' planned for later this month will further reinforce how to keep safe in a range of different situations.
- Leaders have successfully worked with pupils and families to significantly reduce the percentage of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Overall attendance has also improved but remains below that seen nationally.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils say that the work that their teachers give them 'makes us think'. This is because teachers have high expectations of what most groups of pupils can achieve. Lessons build upon what pupils have learnt previously and are interesting. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson, pupils enjoyed finding out information about the human skeleton. They were given opportunities to share their learning with the class, building their oracy skills and consequently all groups of pupils made good progress. However, in some classes, work for the most able pupils is too easy and does not present them with the challenge required to help them make even better progress than they do currently.
- Teachers plan clearly structured lessons and check pupils' understanding of new concepts to gauge how quickly to move learning on. This was evident for example in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on co-ordinates. The class teacher constantly assessed pupils' understanding through sharply focussed questioning and no time was wasted, when it was clear pupils understood, teaching effectively challenged them further. As a result, pupils were able to use reasoning and problem-solving skills by the end of the lesson to confidently find missing co-ordinates.
- The teaching of reading is a significant strength of the school. Teachers develop a passion for books and, among the pupils and at St Christopher's Primary School, it is undoubtedly 'cool' to read. Teachers share the books that they are reading through signs on their doors and pupils are encouraged to choose books

from the well-stocked school library. Events such as a surprise 'reading mob' where teachers took their reading books out to read on the playground further encourage pupils to read for pleasure. Guided reading and phonics are taught well, ensuring that pupils are developing the skills to tackle difficult words and infer meaning from texts. In recognition of its work in this area the school has been awarded a local quality mark.

- Some teachers are beginning to give pupils more opportunities to develop mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills. As a result, pupils are becoming more confident when faced with complex or challenging questions. In a Year 2 lesson on data for instance, pupils showed perseverance to work through a range of questions that required them to interrogate data from bar charts.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and create a positive climate for learning that enables pupils to achieve well in most areas of the curriculum. During a physical education lesson, the teacher ensured that all pupils were involved and learning new football skills through the careful choice of activities. Pupils were required to collaboratively solve problems that further deepened their enjoyment of the lesson.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work follows the school policy and is effective at ensuring that pupils understand what they need to do to improve. This is particularly evident in the marking of writing where pupils say that comments are helpful, especially when they are given opportunities to subsequently re-visit and improve their work.
- Teachers are helping to ensure that pupils are developing as writers. They provide a large number of opportunities to write, including across the curriculum linked to their topics.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Senior leaders and governors have focussed resources and time on improving the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved rapidly since the last inspection. In 2014, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 that made expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average and the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress was similar to the national average.
- Pupils make good progress in all subjects across Key Stage 1 and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics increased in 2014. Evidence seen during lessons and in pupils' books confirms that achievement at the end of Year 2 is on target to improve further this year, particularly in reading.
- Writing books show that most pupils in Key Stage 2 are achieving well. Pupils use vocabulary to good effect. In Year 6, for example, some pupils used imaginative and ambitious vocabulary to compose high-quality personification poetry. Pupils often link their writing to the topics they are studying; in one class, pupils wrote diary entries explaining reasons why the Anglo Saxons invaded Great Britain. However, some pupils are not able to apply basic skills effectively in their writing. This is particularly evident in spelling, where a large proportion of pupils continue to mis-spell some common words.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has been significantly above the national average for the past two years. Mathematics books show that, in some classes, pupils are now starting to be given more opportunities to develop reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Pupils who are known to be disadvantaged achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Gaps in achievement compared to other pupils nationally are narrowing rapidly in reading and mathematics, but have been slower to close in writing. Progress for this group of pupils was significantly above the national average in 2014. By the end of Year 6 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils were almost one term ahead of other pupils in school in mathematics but one term behind compared to other pupils nationally. They were half a term ahead of other pupils in school in reading but one term behind other pupils nationally. In writing, they were two terms behind other pupils in school and other pupils nationally.
- The most able pupils generally make expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics increased in 2014.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Teachers have high expectations for these pupils and make sure that work challenges them appropriately, building on their prior learning. As a result, the progress that this group of pupils make is in line with their peers in school.
- Achievement in a wide range of other subjects is also good. Pupils not only acquire knowledge linked to their topics but are also developing skills linked for instance, to history and geography. Achievement in the arts is strong. Pupils learn to play a musical instrument in Key Stage 2 and art displayed around the school is of a high quality, for instance the work inspired by Piet Mondrain by Year 1.

The early years provision**is good**

- Children get off to a good start when they enter the nursery and continue to make good progress as they move through the early years provision, ensuring that they have the skills to start Year 1. Most teaching builds upon children's interests and helps to develop a love of learning. In a phonics (the sounds that letters make) lesson, for instance, children thoroughly enjoyed finding out about a new letter sound through dance and singing. Another group of children made good progress because they enjoyed playing a physically active game that helped them recognise nonsense and real words. However, sometimes teaching is less effective because work is not planned that matches children's ability. In one lesson observed, the most able children made less progress than that of which they were capable because the teacher did not have high enough expectations of what they could write.
- Expectations of behaviour are high and adults help children to understand the importance of treating one another politely and with respect. Children share resources well; they play and learn together harmoniously. In one lesson, a child was observed kindly sharing a jacket from the role-play area following a polite request to borrow it from another child.
- The learning environment is stimulating and purposeful. Teachers ensure that activities available are interesting and help children to extend their learning. The writing area, for example, has lists of appropriate words available to help children to write interesting sentences. The outdoor environment is spacious and well-equipped. Children are effectively supervised by staff who ensure that they are kept secure and safe, while not hampering their imaginative play.
- The early years manager leads the provision well. She uses accurate and regular assessments to track children's progress and ensure that teaching activities are planned to address any gaps in learning. Parents are well-informed about how well their children are doing and speak highly of the support that they receive from the school.

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	133615
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	462633

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	379
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fran Stoddart
Headteacher	Collette Denby
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2013
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