

St John's Catholic Primary School

Fountains Road, Kirkdale, Liverpool L4 1UN

Inspection dates 12–13 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school exudes ambition for its pupils. Under the unwavering and passionate leadership of the headteacher, the standards that pupils reach by the time they leave the school have improved every year since its previous inspection.
- Leaders continuously support teachers to develop their skills. As a result, teaching across the school is never less than good, with much being outstanding.
- Pupils' learning is brought to life by a rich and vibrant curriculum. A diverse menu of extra-curricular activities is accessed by almost every pupil.
- Pupils' exceptional writing is a significant feature of the school. Displays in every corridor and classroom exemplify the high standards that they achieve.
- Governors hold leaders stringently to account for their actions. Improving outcomes for pupils is at the heart of everything they do.
- Teachers' deep subject knowledge ensures that pupils' learning moves forward rapidly during lessons.
- A love of reading is evident throughout the school. Pupils read widely and often. As a result, they reached standards above the national average in 2015.
- Disadvantaged pupils shine. Leaders ensure that extra funding is used very effectively. Consequently, this group of pupils leave the school reaching standards above those of other pupils nationally.
- Keeping pupils safe is given the utmost priority. Effective systems and policies are in place and understood by all.
- The school is an oasis of calm. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and is an important contributing factor to their outstanding learning.
- Outstanding leadership and teaching in the early years ensures that children make great strides in their learning from the very start of their school life.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the work being undertaken with families and a range of external agencies to reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- Improve even further the progress that the most-able pupils make in mathematics by providing them with more frequent opportunities to challenge and deepen their thinking.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The uncompromising and inspirational headteacher has led the school on a journey of continuous improvement since its previous inspection. Ambition permeates every corner of the school and is shared by adults and pupils alike. No stone is left unturned and no excuses are tolerated in ensuring that only the best will suffice for the pupils at St John's Catholic Primary School.
- Well-established and robust systems to check on the performance of the school ensure that leaders and governors know its strengths and weaknesses inside out. They waste no time in tackling any identified issues. For example, decisive actions to improve the quality of the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling have ensured that standards have improved rapidly across the school. As a result, pupils left Year 6 in 2015 with achievement in this aspect of the curriculum significantly above that seen nationally.
- Leaders visit classrooms and scrutinise pupils' books frequently to check on the quality of teaching across the school. Teachers are very well supported to continually strive for further improvements in their practice. This drive is underpinned by the headteacher's unwavering commitment to high-quality professional development for all staff. Newly qualified teachers, for example, attend bespoke training and visit the school regularly before taking up their posts. This allows them to hit the ground running, with confidence at the start of their career. As a result, teaching is constantly improving and is never less than good, with much that is outstanding.
- Investment in the professional development of staff also extends to middle leaders in the school. This is exemplified by six leaders achieving professional qualifications in the past year. This impetus to nurture leadership is reaping a rich reward. For example, in the early years, outstanding and collaborative leadership has ensured that the addition to the school of a nursery provision for two-year-old children has been seamless and is already a beacon of exemplary practice.
- Pupils are inspired to learn through a rich and diverse curriculum. The development of language skills is a golden thread that pervades every subject. A relentless focus on using exciting and adventurous vocabulary ensures that pupils' written work is lively and engaging. High-quality displays of pupils' writing adorn the walls of every corridor and classroom; celebrating success and encouraging pupils to produce their very best work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted effectively. Pupils develop their understanding of other faiths, for example, by visiting places of worship, such as the local synagogue. The arts feature prominently across the curriculum. Specialist teachers from the local secondary school, for instance, deliver high-quality music lessons. After-school clubs such as faith club and rock band club further enhance this area of the curriculum.
- An exemplary array of extra-curricular clubs exemplify the commitment of the school to help pupils discover aspects of learning that ignite their passion. Ninety-eight per cent of all pupils attended at least one after-school or lunchtime club during the course of the year.
- Pupils' horizons are broadened and aspirations are raised through a close partnership with a charity that works to help prepare pupils for life in modern British society. Pupils, for instance, visited the local Jaguar Land Rover factory to find out about different roles in engineering. Past pupils who have followed a range of careers also visit the school and share their experiences to inspire others. As a result, pupils understand that their hard work today is the stepping stone towards their success in the future.
- Leaders direct pupil premium funding very effectively, ensuring that disadvantaged pupils' achievement is above other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school. A significant proportion of funding is used to employ extra teachers. This means that those pupils who require support benefit from high-quality teaching. In the early years, for instance, children are making strong progress in developing their speech and language skills due to the appointment of a teacher specifically to address this aspect of the curriculum. The excellent work that the school undertakes in this area is used as an exemplar by the local authority. The headteacher supports other schools to improve their strategies to improve the achievement of this group of pupils.
- Sports funding is used exceptionally well to develop teaching skills, promote healthy lifestyles and increase the number of pupils involved in competitive sport. An impressive number of physical activity clubs are provided by the school, which are attended by almost 90% of all pupils. Those pupils who spoke to inspectors say that they value and are proud of the numerous opportunities that they are given to represent their school at competitive sporting events. In the past year alone, the school has taken part in 33 events, involving almost 80% of Key Stage 2 pupils.

- The school's arrangements to keep children safe (safeguarding) are effective. Senior leaders are diligent in ensuring that all staff receive relevant training and that all policies and procedures are up to date. Furthermore, a wide range of visitors to school teach pupils the skills they need to keep themselves safe. For example, local community police officers regularly deliver assemblies on subjects such as road safety and how to keep safe on bonfire night. Through recently watching a local community group dramatic production, pupils have also learnt how to protect themselves from the dangers of gang culture and anti-social behaviour
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors echo the determination and passion of senior leaders to deliver the very best education possible for the pupils of their school community. They bring to bear a wide range of skills and expertise to their role, utilising these effectively to support and challenge leaders in equal measure.
 - Astute financial management enables governors to find new ways to challenge the status quo and improve outcomes for pupils. Some funding has been used to enable a small number of staff to undertake research projects, for example, to improve transition arrangements within the early years. Consequently, a culture of continually striving for improvements across the school has been created and nurtured.
 - Governors challenge leaders to ensure that the school provides a curriculum and activities to meet the needs of all pupils. Minutes of meetings, for example, show that challenging questions are asked about aspects such as equality and diversity and how the school is tackling childhood obesity; as well as how well pupils achieve academically. This exemplifies the governors' commitment to 'wanting our pupils to be valuable citizens of the future'.
 - The high priority given to keeping pupils safe by leaders and staff is strongly reflected by the governing body. Regular meetings are held with leaders to discuss this aspect of the school's work, ensuring that all avenues are explored to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Classrooms across the school crackle with ambition. 'Teachers push us hard because it brings out the best in us' is typical of comments from pupils. In a Key Stage 2 English lesson, for instance, pupils with special educational needs produced writing of an exceptionally high standard because their teacher had the highest expectations of what they could achieve.
- Teachers use what they know about pupils' prior learning to plan lessons that meet their needs and challenge them appropriately. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils wrestled with problems that required them to find missing measurements to calculate the area of complex shapes. As a consequence of this high level of challenge, pupils' learning moved forward rapidly. Nonetheless, in a small number of classes, learning could be accelerated even further by giving the most-able pupils greater opportunities to undertake investigative activities.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge underpins the strong progress that pupils make during lessons. Specialist teachers supplement this expertise further. In a Year 3 music lesson, for example, pupils' learning moved forward with pace due to the skilled teaching of rhythm and percussion. The teacher's enthusiasm for her subject was contagious and ensured that pupils thoroughly enjoyed their learning.
- A love of reading is promoted well across the school. Encouragement to read is a strong feature of the school environment in which the staircases are decorated to resemble the spines of well-known books. A bright, well-stocked library provides pupils with opportunities to read a wide range of texts. Pupils who shared their books and read with inspectors did so fluently and with relish and in some cases were reluctant to stop; their enthusiasm for reading is clearly evident.
- Teachers use time in lessons effectively to check on the progress that pupils are making, offering incisive feedback to ensure that pupils do not fall behind and to develop learning further. During a Year 4 science lesson, for example, the class teacher used her checks on pupils' work to shape questions that extended learning about materials that conduct electricity.
- High-quality writing displays abound throughout the school, demonstrating opportunities for skills to be developed across other subjects. Teachers do not pass up on any chance to improve pupils' language skills and expose them to a diet of rich vocabulary from the outset of their school life. As a consequence, pupils' writing develops strongly so that standards throughout the school are high.
- Exemplary relationships between pupils and adults underpin the progress that pupils make across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants celebrate success at every opportunity, helping to develop

pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

- Pupils say that learning is fun. Lessons are often lively and learning is supported through engaging activities. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, for instance, pupils enjoyed learning number bonds through singing a song with their teacher.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. All pupils who responded to a recent school questionnaire say that they enjoy coming to school. Pupils reported that they are well supported by their teachers, who listen to them and are approachable when they are worried.
- Older pupils are excellent role models and are aware of the impact of their actions on influencing the behaviour of younger pupils. They revel in the opportunities that they are given to take on positions of responsibility. A number of Year 6 pupils, for instance, give up their own time after school to help coach younger pupils at the table tennis club. Members of the school council say that they feel valued because school leaders listen to them, allowing them to have an influence within the school.
- Respect and tolerance resonate throughout the school. Pupils report that everyone is made to feel welcome at their school irrespective of any differences. As a new member of the school proudly explained, 'I am learning all about Liverpool and the rest of the school are learning about my country'. Pupils who met with inspectors explained that finding out about where other pupils come from helps to develop their understanding and respect for other cultures.
- Physical well-being is promoted very effectively. Pupils are encouraged to take part in physical activities during lunchtimes to improve their fitness levels. The school has been successful in securing funding to enable children in the early years to take part in a project to promote daily exercise to improve physical health.
- Those pupils interviewed by inspectors say that bullying is extremely rare in their school. They are aware of the different forms that bullying can take (including online bullying). Visits by 'bully busters' and work during anti-bullying week help to further enlighten pupils' understanding of this topic.
- Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of how to keep themselves safe; including when online. A range of visitors to school to deliver assemblies and workshops help ensure that pupils develop an awareness of safety in the home.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Classrooms throughout the school are an oasis of calm. Pupils' exemplary behaviour contributes significantly to the progress that they make in lessons. In a Key Stage 2 lesson, for example, pupils listened respectfully to each other's arguments during an excellent debate on the use of horses during war (inspired by the novel *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo).
- Exemplary behaviour and respect for other members of the school community are taught and modelled by adults from the very outset of pupils' life at the school. While children were preparing for a physical education lesson in the Nursery, for example, one child was observed stating 'you appear to be in a bit of a muddle, can I help you?', typifying the respect and politeness of pupils towards one another throughout the school.
- Leaders are relentless in their efforts to improve attendance. Evidence seen by inspectors shows that this is having a positive impact, and attendance for this year is now close to the national average. However, despite the school's exhaustive efforts, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school more remains stubbornly above that seen nationally. The school is working closely with a range of agencies and the local authority education welfare team to continue to tackle this issue, including through taking legal action.

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding

- From starting points that are typically well below those expected when they enter school, pupils make strong and sustained progress in all subjects. As a result, pupils left Year 6 in 2015 with standards in

reading, writing and mathematics above those seen nationally.

- Leaders' relentless focus on improving outcomes for pupils has ensured that standards, by the time pupils leave the school, have improved every year since 2011. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the rigours of the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' skills in phonics (the sounds that letters make) are developed well from the outset. Highly effective teaching in the early years ensures that solid foundations are put in place. High-quality teaching continues in Key Stage 1 so that pupils make rapid progress. In a Year 1 lesson, for instance, pupils enjoyed playing a game with their teacher that enabled them to rehearse the sounds that blends of letters made. As a consequence, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the phonics screening test in 2015 was in line with that seen nationally.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is a significant strength of the school. Excellent teaching and the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve fuel a culture where writing is valued by all. As a result, pupils leaving Key Stage 2 have reached standards significantly above the national average for the past three years.
- Evidence seen during lessons and in books shows that pupils make strong progress in mathematics. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, pupils developed their division skills well because the teacher had planned activities, using practical resources, that built upon pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Nonetheless, the good progress that the most-able pupils make could be further improved by using a greater range of investigative activities to promote deeper thinking.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Astute allocation of the funding that the school receives to support this group ensures that they make progress that is at least in line with other pupils. As a consequence, in 2015 this group of pupils left Year 6 reaching standards above other pupils nationally.
- Previously low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well. This is because expectations are high and the support that is put in place for those pupils that require it is effective. The leader of the provision for this group of pupils monitors progress closely. She utilises support, for example, from a local special school, to ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have the skills necessary to help pupils make progress that is at least in line with other pupils within the school.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Ambitious leadership and outstanding teaching ensures that children get off to an excellent start with their education. Lesson observations and school assessment data show that children make significant progress from starting points that are typically well below those expected for their age. Children left Reception in 2015 with a good level of development that was below the national average; however standards are rising securely. Due to the firm foundations put in place, children leave the early years well prepared to build upon their successes as they enter Key Stage 1.
- Strong collaboration between leaders, parents and the children's centre has ensured that the new nursery provision for two year olds has developed rapidly; reflecting the same aspirational values apparent elsewhere in the school.
- Teachers' enthusiasm is contagious and children enjoy their learning. Every activity is carefully planned to meet the needs of all groups of children, developing curiosity and encouraging conversation. Adults model language skills very effectively. For example, children in the Nursery enjoyed imitating a conversation held with 'Charlie the Bear' and their teacher.
- A love of reading is promoted from the moment children start school. Children are encouraged to be 'reading rock stars' by taking books home from the early years library as often as possible. Leaders ensure that parents are given the support needed to develop reading skills at home. One hundred per cent of parents recently attended phonics sessions in the Reception class.
- Close links have been forged with the adjoining children's centre. As a result, children and parents are directed to a range of support that enhances learning at school. Children's speech and language skills are developed well. For instance, when they attend 'chatterbox' workshops.
- Well-established routines and high expectations ensure that throughout the early years children's behaviour is exemplary. A sense of purposeful calm and quiet exists throughout the provision that contributes strongly to even the youngest pupils maintaining their concentration and remaining focused on their learning.
- Children's health, safety and well-being are paramount. Conscientious staff supervise children diligently to ensure that they are safe. Safeguarding policies are fully adhered to and arrangements for reporting

concerns are clear and understood by all. Specialist sports teachers deliver lessons that engender a love of physical activity. For example, children developed balance and co-ordination skills while enjoying singing a song in a gymnastics lesson.

- Parental involvement is a significant strength in the early years. Parents who spoke to inspectors stated that communication is excellent and that they value the opportunities that they are given to attend workshops on areas such as improving reading. Parents and school staff share successes and learning with each other through 'magical moments' and 'my day' sheets, helping to accelerate learning at home and school.
- Leadership in the early years is outstanding. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision well, adapting and developing the provision in response to their self-evaluation. They are meticulous and uncompromising in shaping and communicating their vision to talented and committed staff, ensuring that everyone is working towards the same aspirational goals.

School details

Unique reference number	132796
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10003649

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	427
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Mr Robert Gittins
Headteacher	Miss Denise Maudsley
Telephone number	01519221924
Website	www.stjohnskirkdale.co.uk/
Email address	Johnsi-ao@st-johns-inf.liverpool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 July 2011

Information about this school

- St John’s Catholic Primary School is a larger than average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average (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).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom English is not or believed not to be their first language is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is broadly similar to the national average.
- In 2014, the school met 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.
- The school has a nursery provision for two-year-old children as well as a nursery for three-year-old children.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school jointly manages a children’s centre.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in each class of the school, including joint observations and a learning walk with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff (including newly qualified teachers), a local authority education welfare officer, representatives of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Archdiocese.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning, assessment information and reports on the quality of teaching.
- 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 two small groups of pupils, including the school council, to chat about their learning and 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.
- A range of pupils' books were checked.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents at the start of the day. They also took account of the 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also took note of the five responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff.
- Three further Ofsted inspectors joined the inspection on the second day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Martin Bell, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Diane Palin	Ofsted Inspector
Saeeda Ishaq	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Parker	Ofsted Inspector

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