

St Swithun's Catholic Primary School

Taswell Road, Southsea PO5 2RG

Inspection dates 3–4 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The interim headteacher and deputy, with strong support from the governors and local authority, have brought about dramatic, rapid improvements in staff morale and parental support. One parent is reported as saying, 'the school has found its heart again'.
- Governors and staff share the leaders' high expectations and ambition for the school. The interim headteacher's inspirational leadership and relentless focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment have been effective. Teaching is good throughout the school and staff apply the school's systems consistently, such as marking pupils' written work and giving constructive feedback.
- Pupils get off to a good start in the early years due to the effective teaching, well-managed resources and stimulating environment. Parents are involved well in their children's learning.
- Good support, guidance and challenge from the local authority have contributed to the school's rapid improvement.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and behave well in lessons and around the school. They respond well to responsibilities such as being part of the school council management team. They are diligent and eager to learn. They take pride in their work and attendance has been above average for the past few years.
- All aspects of safeguarding are managed well and pupils say that they feel safe in school.
- The school provides pupils with a good range of subjects enhanced by clubs, educational trips and visitors. Music is a strength, with many pupils learning a musical instrument. Pupils have a keen sense of fairness and tolerance towards others. They are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils make good progress in all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics. The most-able pupils receive a good level of challenge. Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs or who are disadvantaged is well targeted and effective.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always identify quickly enough that some less-able pupils need more help to cope with work that they find difficult.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough subject-specific feedback when marking written work in topic and science books.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers quickly identify and respond to help less-able pupils who are struggling to cope with demanding work in lessons.
- Ensure that teachers provide pupils with more subject-specific feedback when marking written work in topic and science books (i.e. in subjects other than literacy, mathematics and religious education, where it is done well).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The school has been through a period of high staff turnover, with four headteachers in the past few years. Most of the current teachers have been with the school for two years or less. Despite this turbulence, the current interim headteacher and deputy have managed to bring about significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Relationship with parents have been improved dramatically by the new school leaders through a range of strategies such as more regular communication, more frequent parent meetings and being accessible at the start and end of the day. The strength of parents' response to the new leadership has been exceptional, with over 60 written comments on Parent View, the vast majority of which focused on how the school has improved under the new leadership. Comments such as 'there has been a marked improvement', 'revitalised leadership', 'we have our old school back but with extra benefits' and 'impressed with the leadership and passion (of the headteacher)' were common and reflected how positively parents now feel about the direction that the school is taking.
- The interim headteacher has provided outstanding leadership in establishing a climate of high expectations, positive staff morale and a shared drive for continued improvement. His high aspirations and view that the school should be 'doing even better' are shared by governors and staff. Aply supported by his interim deputy, the headteacher has introduced a relentless and successful regime of monitoring and improving the quality of teaching. Staff training at the beginning of the year included a focus on establishing 'non-negotiables' for teaching that have helped to establish a consistent approach to lessons. Staff described how they appreciated being involved in writing school policies and guidance, for example on behaviour. They feel valued, trusted and excited about the school's future.
- Teachers with subject responsibilities are receiving a good range of support to help them in their roles, including from the local authority. They are starting to have a positive impact in their areas, for example in improving the teaching of phonics and writing. In most cases, they are very new to their roles but show a good understanding of what needs to improve.
- Leaders have prepared a clear, well-focused plan for improvement based on a good knowledge of what is working well and what needs to improve. Their self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Staff have been given a good range of opportunities for professional development, including visits to and from a local outstanding school. The newly qualified teachers are guided and mentored effectively and spoke about the good induction training that they received. All staff now receive performance appraisal meetings with targets and reviews.
- The school provides pupils with a broad range of subjects, with appropriate emphasis given to literacy, mathematics and religious education. The staff have revised their subject plans this year to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. They have made a good start at assessing pupils' attainment and progress 'without levels' in reading, writing and mathematics. Classroom lessons are enhanced by a wide range of clubs, trips and visitors. Music is a particular strength. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching and opportunities to learn a musical instrument or join a choir. An orchestra rehearsal seen involved pupils of different ages reading music and playing a range of instruments tunefully and accurately.
- The school provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through lessons, assemblies and its general ethos. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They described how they learn about British values, such as the rule of law, in their history lessons and about democracy through voting for school council members. Pupils are taught about different cultures and faiths and they show a good level of tolerance towards those who are different, including those with special educational needs. There are strong links with the local church, where pupils attend mass regularly. There is also a small prayer room in school where children can go during breaktimes.
- The school is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, with care taken to ensure that every child is helped to achieve their best. No form of discrimination or intolerance is permitted. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are looked after well. The inclusion leader plans how to support these pupils appropriately and they are helped to make progress as good as their peers. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make very good progress as they benefit from good support from teachers and teaching assistants and from opportunities to talk to their peers.
- The school is using its pupil premium funds effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. The funds pay for additional one-to-one and small group teaching, as well as for attendance at clubs and

school trips that widen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils who need it have access to support from a teaching assistant trained to provide emotional support, which has boosted their self-confidence and motivation to learn.

- The physical education (PE) and sports premium funds have been used well to increase pupils' participation in sports clubs and competitions. Teachers have also benefited from training to improve their skills in teaching PE.
- The local authority has provided timely and effective support and challenge, particularly in the past few terms. The new adviser linked to the school helped to recruit the interim headteacher and has secured effective support from a nearby national leader of education and lead practitioner. A good range of training has been provided for subject coordinators and governors as well as joint observations to validate leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching. The local authority involvement has been appreciated by staff and governors and has contributed to the school's rapid improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has supported the school through a difficult few years. Governors share the leaders' high expectations and ambitions for the school.
 - Governors are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are kept well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by senior leaders and through their own regular visits. Governors have worked with leaders to drive improvements in teaching and have not shied away from making difficult decisions.
 - Statutory responsibilities are undertaken appropriately and governors ensure that finances are managed well, including performance pay for staff and the effective use of pupil premium and sports funds.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff have received appropriate training and more is planned for later this term. Staff are vigilant about reporting and following up possible safeguarding concerns and they understand the procedures. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school and the vast majority of parents agree.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good across the school. Teachers' approach to planning and teaching is consistent and effective.
- Relationships are purposeful and positive. Staff have established a calm environment in which pupils feel safe and prepared to answer and ask questions. Pupils enjoyed pointing out a spelling mistake on the board in one class and asking interesting questions about animal habitats in another. Teachers encourage pupils to explain their answers in mathematics and other subjects and pupils' responses are often thoughtful and articulate.
- Pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. They say that they are motivated by being given the criteria for how to meet the expected standard. They are also given regular written feedback in their books, especially for literacy and mathematics. Many said that they feel that they can approach teachers when they do not understand something.
- Teachers question pupils effectively and are encouraging them to all get involved in thinking of the answer and explaining it to their peers. This keeps them all engaged and involved.
- The challenge has increased since the last inspection, when it was an area for improvement. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, in terms of their behaviour and response to challenging work. More-able pupils are given work that is often demanding and really makes them think and apply their knowledge and understanding. More-able Year 6 pupils tackled multiplication and simplification of fractions with interest and concentration. Younger pupils could describe adverbs, similes and metaphors and give examples of 'fronted adverbials'.
- Teaching assistants generally provide effective support to individuals and small groups of pupils. They ask pertinent and probing questions to make pupils think and progress well. When teaching assistants are not present, teachers do not always spot when less-able pupils are struggling to cope with demanding work and need more help. As a result, these pupils sometimes make less progress than they otherwise could.
- Teachers check pupils' written work regularly and follow the school policy. Pupils are given time to respond to teachers' feedback and questions. Although pupils are taught a range of subjects, they only receive detailed subject-specific feedback in literacy, mathematics and religious education. Teachers' checking of work in other subjects is more general and not yet clearly linked to the new National

Curriculum expectations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils and parents say that there is little bullying and most feel that it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils are aware of different sorts of bullying and know how to keep safe when using the internet. The pupils' school council management team discussed the anti-bullying policy and made sensible suggestions for how it could be improved during a 'working lunch meeting'.
- Pupils are polite and show respect towards each other and to adults. They are articulate and self-confident and take care over the presentation in their books.
- Leaders pay close attention to pupils' individual needs and a part-time teaching assistant has been trained to help pupils with emotional and social needs. Most pupils know how to keep healthy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils play energetically at breaks and lunchtimes, but are careful to look out for each other. They are attentive and keen to learn in lessons. Occasionally, a few pupils lose focus during whole class sessions.
- Pupils are proud of their school and their attendance and punctuality are good. Attendance has been above the national average for the past few years. Leaders are vigilant about improving the attendance of the few who have missed a lot of schooling. They have introduced a breakfast club, which has helped to improve punctuality in some cases.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils are making good progress in all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics, building on from the positive start they receive in the early years.
- Results in the phonics (the sounds that letters represent) screening check in Year 1 have been above the national average. Following a dip in 2015 from a very high result in 2014, school leaders have revised the teaching of phonics, and the current Year 1 pupils are on track to do very well this year. The teaching of phonics is good: it is lively, engaging and well matched to pupils' needs.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 has been close to the national average over the past few years. Results in reading were well above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2015 and above at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils enjoy reading and read widely. The school has introduced a range of strategies to support reading, such as book clubs, a newspaper club and a well-stocked and inviting library. Pupils are well-prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Writing has been less successful than reading and mathematics in previous years, especially in terms of the higher levels of attainment. The literacy coordinator has promoted writing through the school and currently pupils are given a good range of opportunities to write in different genres in literacy and other subjects. Pupils' writing is often imaginative, fluent and grammatically accurate. Most pupils in all year groups are making rapid progress.
- Pupils are learning well in mathematics, where a recently introduced scheme is helping to raise standards. The most-able mathematicians are participating in the National Maths Challenge and they are clearly being given work that stretches them.
- The most-able pupils are achieving well in all subjects. They are given more challenging work than in previous years, as a result of the new curriculum and teachers' higher expectations.
- There are very small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each year group and several of these also have additional special educational needs. The outcomes for these pupils have fluctuated over the past few years in terms of the gap with others in the school, although progress gaps are narrowing. In 2015, the progress of disadvantaged pupils was close to the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils, from most starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress due to well-planned and delivered additional support. They receive effective extra help in lessons and sometimes in one-to-one or small group sessions. The pupils who speak English as an additional language are achieving well. They are given good opportunities to develop their speaking skills and are well supported by their peers.

Early years provision

is good

- Early years is led and managed very effectively. All aspects of safeguarding and health and safety are managed well.
- The leader has established very good links with parents. Parents are invited to drop-in mornings and receive good communication about their children's progress. They are encouraged to participate in their children's learning and to contribute to the records of children's progress. The school has provided sessions for parents to learn about how their children are taught and to help them support their children at home.
- Children are taught well in the early years. Staff have created lively, stimulating environments inside and outside. These provide children with a good range of opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across all areas of learning. Children respond well. They persevere with tasks and show concentration and good cooperation with their peers.
- The staff have focused on writing to good effect. Boys' writing, which was a weakness, has improved considerably this year. The children are on track to achieve even better results than last year in terms of the proportion reaching a good level of development, which has risen year-on-year and was above average in 2015.
- Staff monitor all children's progress carefully and help those who are disadvantaged or who speak English as an additional language to make rapid progress. Additional funds are used well to close the attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils. Adults question children well and encourage them to speak. The outside area includes a very wide range of equipment that helps to develop children's physical skills, confidence and cooperation. Children in the early years are well prepared for moving to Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	116386
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10012291

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ben Foy
Headteacher	Andrew Olive
Telephone number	02392 829339
Website	stswithunscatholicprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	correspondence@st-swithuns.portsmouth.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 June 2014

Information about this school

- St Swithun’s Catholic Primary School is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school, with one and a half classes in each year group and two full-time Reception classes.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. Pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is close to the national average.
- Around three-quarters of pupils are of White British heritage with the remainder from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. Nearly a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school has recently introduced a breakfast club each morning.
- There have been two different headteachers and several changes of teachers since the last inspection. The current headteacher and deputy took up their posts in September 2015; they are interim appointments for two years.
- The school is receiving support from a local national leader of education from College Park Infant School.
- The school meets the government’s floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in each class, with most observations alongside the interim headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors observed an orchestral rehearsal and a hymn practice assembly and a lunchtime meeting of the school council management team.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' current work in all subjects and year groups. They spoke with pupils in arranged meetings, during lessons and during lunch- and breaktimes. They listened to pupils read and spoke with them about their reading habits.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject coordinators, and teachers.
- Inspectors met with three members of the governing body, including the outgoing and new chairs. They also spoke to a representative from the Portsmouth Catholic diocese and met with the local authority education adviser who has been working with the school since September 2015.
- Inspectors talked to parents in the playground at the start of the day.
- A range of school documents were studied, including information about pupils' progress and attainment, minutes of governing body meetings, the school improvement plan, the self-evaluation report, safeguarding documents and records, attendance and behaviour records, policies, records of the monitoring of teaching, and information relating to teachers' performance targets and training.
- Inspectors took account of the 70 responses and written comments of parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 18 questionnaires returned by staff or completed online.

Inspection team

Helena McVeigh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Praetig	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Phillips	Ofsted Inspector

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