

St Clement's Catholic Primary School

Oxford Road, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4NX

Inspection dates 10–11 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- A very friendly, caring and inclusive atmosphere ensures that pupils feel extremely safe and well cared for at St Clement's.
- Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. They behave exceptionally well. Their highly positive attitudes to learning mean they work hard and take great pride in their efforts. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the life of the school.
- Early years provision has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is a strength of the school. High-quality teaching in the early years class ensures that children get off to an excellent start in their school life.
- The teaching of early reading skills is very effective. Throughout the school pupils develop a love of reading.
- Determined leadership by senior leaders ensures that an uncompromising drive to improve is present in all areas of the school.
- Parents are highly positive about the education provided for their children. They overwhelmingly agree that their children are happy, are kept safe and are cared for well.
- Governors are well informed. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and challenge senior leaders effectively.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. It is now good. Clear explanations inform pupils about what is expected of them and allow them to work purposefully. As a result they make at least good progress from their starting points.
- By the end of Year 6, almost all pupils reach the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics and a good proportion do better than this.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 does not always challenge pupils, particularly the most able, to reach their full potential in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improvements secured in marking and the use of learning targets are still at an early stage and further development is needed.
- Many subject leaders are new to their posts. Their role in checking on how well pupils are doing and in improving the quality of teaching and learning is not yet fully developed

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Speed up pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 still further so that a greater proportion make faster than expected progress and exceed the standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - continuing to use the marking policy to help pupils to improve their work and make speedy progress
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to become more familiar with the targets set for them to improve their work and time to use these regularly
 - regularly providing activities that challenge pupils, particularly the most able, to extend their thinking and deepen their understanding.

- Further strengthen leadership and management by ensuring all subject leaders check the quality of teaching and learning so that they can bring about further improvements in pupils' achievement in their area of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Senior leaders and governors have successfully maintained a firm focus on improving the quality of teaching despite a number of staff changes. Good management of teachers' performance has resulted in improved outcomes for pupils, with progress now good or better across the school. Standards continue to rise and the school is well placed to continue to improve.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work extremely well together. They lead by example, providing a strong steer for class teachers, many of whom have joined the school since the previous inspection. All staff work as an effective and committed team and morale is high.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas to improve. They regularly review the quality of teaching and all other aspects of the school's work. Pupils' progress and the standards they are working at are checked very carefully. Swift action is taken to help pupils who may be in danger of falling behind to catch up with their classmates.
- The deputy headteacher has specific responsibility for improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. She contributes very well to further developing the quality of teaching; she visits classrooms frequently and offers insightful and detailed advice and guidance to teachers and teaching assistants. This is particularly helpful for those staff who are new to the teaching profession.
- The regular training provided to keep subject knowledge up to date and skills sharp is valued by staff. Teachers work together closely to improve their practice. They actively seek out ways to improve their teaching by sharing ideas and asking each other for advice and support, reflecting the whole-school focus on improvement that has been nurtured by the senior leadership team. As a result of this, the quality of teaching and learning across the school has improved and is now good.
- The curriculum is well planned. It captures and responds to the interests of pupils well and is enriched by a range of visitors to the school and trips including residential visits for three year groups. Senior leaders effectively managed the school's transition to the new assessment arrangements required for the National Curriculum. They regularly work with a number of local schools and others in a neighbouring local authority and have implemented a robust system for checking on and recording pupils' progress.
- Links with the local Catholic church are very important to the school and provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on Christian values and spiritual matters. Leaders ensure that, through the curriculum, including the development of personal, social and health education and religious studies, pupils are clear that many of their values are shared by those of no faith and those with faiths other than their own. This work contributes well to pupils' understanding of life in Britain today.
- The primary sports funding is used very well to develop pupils' health and well-being. Sports coaches help develop teachers' skills and the wide range of clubs on offer after school are well attended.
- Links with parents have been strengthened since the previous inspection. For example, leaders provide family workshops to help parents to develop ways to help their children's learning at home. Parents say that the school's use of social media has improved communication systems between home and school. The school's website contains the required information. However, some items are out of date and leaders are exploring ways to further improve the content of the site.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively, providing well-planned, targeted support for the small group of eligible pupils.
- The provision for pupils with disability and those with special educational needs is led very effectively by the deputy headteacher. Pupils' needs are quickly identified and high-quality support is provided to enable these pupils to achieve well personally and academically.
- Middle and subject leaders are highly committed, energetic and hardworking. They have a good understanding of their subject areas. However, many are new to their roles and they have not yet had time to develop the skills needed to fully drive improvements in their areas of responsibility. There is more to do, for example, to ensure that the level of challenge provided by teachers is high enough, particularly for the most-able pupils, or that the use of pupils' learning targets is fully developed.
- The local authority periodically reviews the school's progress towards the key issues identified in the previous inspection report. The school works closely with other schools and the local authority is using the expertise of staff in the school to provide advice and support for schools in the local area.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors robustly challenge and support school leaders and contribute well to their effectiveness.
 - The governing body responded promptly to the findings of the previous inspection report. Governors reviewed the way they worked with a national leader of governance. They made changes to the organisation of the governing body as a result and all governors undertook training to strengthen their skills. Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are actively holding the school to account.
 - Governors have worked effectively with the headteacher to bring about improvements in the school. A dedicated 'Journey to Good' committee frequently checks on progress against the school's improvement plans.
 - Each governor is linked to a particular area of school provision and meets regularly with the leader of their area to gain a full insight into the work of the school.
 - The governing body has a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning because it receives regular reports from school leaders. Additionally, governors carry out focused learning walks to gain first-hand views of the life of the school. Governors' mantra is 'show me as well as tell'.
 - Governors regularly review the impact of the use of pupil premium so that disadvantaged pupils make at least good progress from their starting points. They check on the allocation of the primary sports funding to ensure it is used to promote pupils' health and well-being very effectively.
 - Systems to manage the performance of staff at all levels, including the headteacher, are rigorous. Governors ensure that the objectives set for staff match the school's priorities while supporting staff in their own development.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors and school leaders afford this aspect of the school's work an extremely high priority. All the required checks on staff and visitors are carried out in line with statutory requirements and proper records are kept. School policies and practice reflect current guidance and regulations. Governors check regularly on safeguarding arrangements by talking to staff and pupils and making sure safeguarding procedures in school follow required practice. The school site is kept safe and secure. Supervision arrangements during the school day and during breakfast club and after-school activities give no cause for concern.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Senior leaders' prompt and decisive action since the previous inspection has led to improvements in the quality of teaching. It is now good and in the early years it is excellent. Inspection evidence, school records and pupils' work show that all year groups are making more rapid progress than in the recent past. Gaps in pupils' learning caused by some previously weaker teaching have been overcome and almost all pupils are working at least at the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics and are making good or better progress from their starting points.
- Pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations of what can be achieved in lessons. Positive relationships between pupils and adults in all classrooms contribute strongly to pupils' good learning. They strive to do their best and they achieve well.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan activities that engage pupils' interests well. They use questioning effectively to check for understanding and listen carefully to pupils' responses to identify any misconceptions. They provide clear explanations to overcome any confusion.
- However, sometimes the work provided, especially for the most-able pupils, does not provide enough challenge. It does not always move pupils' learning on quickly enough once new skills and knowledge have been developed or stretch their thinking or deepen learning well enough. This can prevent pupils, particularly the most able, from making even better progress.
- Where teachers mark work and use pupils' targets in line with the school's policy, pupils are clear on what they need to do to improve their work and develop their ideas further. In completing their 'next steps' or checking their work against their targets they often make good and sometimes better progress. However, leaders recognise that there is some variation in how well teachers set and use pupils' targets or adhere to the school's marking policy.
- Reading is taught well so that pupils enjoy books and learn to read confidently. Effective teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) in early years and Key Stage 1 enables pupils to secure the key skills they need to read and write successfully from an early age. Older pupils gain much from the daily 'guided reading' sessions. Teachers incorporate a variety of books into everyday classroom life.

Pupils use the school libraries regularly and say they enjoy reading at home.

- Pupils' science skills are being developed well. There is strong emphasis on 'working scientifically' as pupils plan their own experiments, make predictions about what will happen and choose how to record the outcomes of their investigations.
- Recently, the school has introduced drama into the curriculum as a way of further developing pupils' creativity and English skills. During the inspection Year 3 pupils enjoyed expressing themselves in this way.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. A feature of St Clement's is how very kind and caring pupils are to one another. Parents who spoke to inspectors praised the community feel of the school. As one pupil put it, 'We belong to a family here.'
- Pupils are very clear about the importance of their education. Attitudes to learning are excellent; pupils work hard and show great levels of concentration. They are eager to learn and all make at least good progress from their starting points.
- Work in pupils' books shows they have a willingness and confidence to 'have a go' when tackling new work. They show great perseverance and learn best and make most rapid progress when teachers provide work which challenges them.
- Attendance is high and reflects pupils' enjoyment of school.
- Pupils say incidents of bullying are very rare and school records support this view. They trust the adults to take prompt action to resolve any issues that do occur.
- Pupils' work and their comments to inspectors demonstrate that pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils understand the importance of keeping active and eating healthily. Many participate in after-school sports clubs and work hard in physical education lessons. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using mobile technology and the internet. During the inspection, all Key Stage 2 pupils paid very close attention to the local police officers who spoke to them about the dangers of sharing personal information on social networks.
- Pupils make an excellent contribution to their school community. School council representatives are elected by their peers and take their role seriously. Year 6 pupils act as 'Buddies' for Reception children. They meet regularly throughout the year. For example, at Christmas older pupils helped the younger ones write letters and then they visited the postbox together to make sure the letters were sent on their way safely.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding during lessons, around school and at all times of the day including the popular and well-attended breakfast club.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They are confident and respectful in social situations. Pupils are articulate and well-mannered when they converse with each other, adults and visitors alike.
- All parents who completed the online questionnaire said that their children are kept safe in school. The overwhelming majority of those who responded with comments online and those who spoke to inspectors said that their children are happy in school and they have no concerns about behaviour.
- The school behaviour policy is well understood by all. Pupils say the school's rules and sanctions are applied consistently by all staff.
- In lessons pupils work hard and behave very well. This is because they are genuinely interested in learning. They and their teachers and the support staff have extremely high expectations of them.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Swift and robust action taken by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is proving successful. As a result, outcomes achieved by pupils are now good and they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The great majority of children enter the Reception class with skills lower than those typical for their age, particularly in the skills that relate to reading, writing, number and aspects of their personal development.

Since the previous inspection the progress made by children in the early years has strongly improved and in 2015 the proportion reaching a good level of development was securely in line with national expectations. Children currently in the Reception class have got off to an excellent start and many, including the most able, are making rapid progress from their individual starting points.

- The progress of all groups, including the small number of pupils with disability and those with special educational needs, is good. Effective support helps those in danger of falling behind their classmates to catch up quickly.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2015 almost all pupils made the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics and a good proportion did better than this. Most pupils reached the standard expected for their age in all three subjects and the proportion reaching the higher levels was at least in line with the national average.
- All Year 2 pupils in 2015 reached the standard expected of them for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion reaching the higher level in all subjects was similar to the national average. Given their below average starting points at the start of Year 1 this represents rapid progress for this year group.
- The school's performance information, work in pupils' books and evidence from lesson observations indicate that the progress of current pupils in reading, writing and mathematics across Key Stages 1 and 2 is good. Boys make the same good progress as girls. Most pupils continue to reach the standards expected for their age and a good proportion reach the higher levels.
- The most-able pupils make good progress and achieve above average standards. Nonetheless, senior leaders know that a higher level of challenge is required in order for the most able to maximise their progress and go on to achieve the highest standards.
- In 2015 nearly every pupil in Year 1 again achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to support disadvantaged pupils. These pupils now make faster progress than their peers in the school and other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. Progress is similar to that of other pupils in writing. Disadvantaged pupils reach at least similar standards to other pupils.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Children enter the Reception class with a wide variety of different pre-school experiences. They join the school with a range of knowledge, skills and abilities which are below those typical for their age.
- Since the previous inspection children have made increasingly strong progress from their starting points. As a result, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception class has increased year on year. In 2015, the proportion of children reaching the expected standard for their age was in line with the national average and they were well placed to start work in Year 1. School records and inspection evidence show that many of the children currently in the Reception class have made rapid progress since they entered the school in September. Too few children are eligible for the pupil premium funding to make comparison with other children useful.
- The deputy headteacher, as early years leader, provides outstanding leadership and management for the early years provision. Strong partnerships with parents exist. 'Learning diaries' provide an excellent record of children's progress in early years. Parents' contributions of 'Wow!' events showing achievements made at home are included in these wonderful records and are celebrated warmly in school.
- The early years team constantly strive, and succeed, in providing the very best start for the children that they can. The deputy headteacher and class teacher have an excellent understanding of the early years curriculum and of the importance of meeting the precise needs of every child. They use the information they know about the children to carefully plan the next steps of learning for each child.
- The quality of teaching and learning in early years is outstanding. Teachers and support staff provide exciting activities which completely capture children's imagination and help to develop their curiosity. For example, during the inspection, the day had started with a film clip prepared by their teacher. A 'superhero' had set the children a challenge. A series of well-planned activities helped children find out about other superheroes. Some children, for example, used tablet computers to read a code prepared by their teacher which led them to further information. They confidently used their technology skills and eagerly wrote up their findings, totally engrossed in their 'mission'.
- The stimulating early years environment is expertly organised to motivate and excite children to want to learn. When children are engaged in activities adults know exactly when to intervene and when to step

back. For example, when children were looking for information about how to design their own superhero adults took the opportunity to develop and extend their language through careful questioning.

- Reception children and Year 6 pupils all enjoy the school 'buddy' system. This term both year groups are studying the same 'superheroes' topic, albeit at the appropriate age level. This is proving great fun for all concerned and helping the younger children's language development too.
- Children have excellent attitudes to learning and their behaviour is outstanding. They listen well to each other and the adults and concentrate for long periods of time. Children are confident with classroom routines and are keen to learn.
- Staff are extremely vigilant to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and the quality of care provided is excellent.

School details

Unique reference number	111320
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10002256

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrea Williams
Headteacher	Mark Parker
Telephone number	01928 572129
Website	www.st-clements@halton.gov.uk
Email address	sec.stclements@halton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	30–31 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than most other primary schools. The proportion of boys in the school is much higher than that found in most other schools. The proportion of boys and girls varies across the school but in some year groups around three quarters of the pupils are boys. Children enter early years in the Reception class. They arrive from at least 10 pre-school settings.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils with disability and those with special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is below that found in most other schools. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at other than the usual times is well below the national average.
- The school has experienced significant changes to staffing since the previous inspection. Many teachers have joined the school since that time.
- 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.
- Governors provide a breakfast club for pupils who attend the school.
- In 2014 the school gained the Primary Quality Mark for the fourth time.
- Governors were supported by a national leader of governance following the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed learning in classes and when pupils were working in small groups, including some observations made jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their work. They listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills. Inspectors talked to pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading. Inspectors took note of displays around the school.
- Inspectors talked with pupils informally as they played at breaktimes and visited the dining hall at lunchtime and observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around school. They met formally with three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors met with five governors. They spoke to a representative of the local authority and met with members of school staff.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day and took account of 54 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's most recent surveys of pupils' and parents' views. They took account of 22 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including information about pupils' progress, school improvement and external views of the school. Inspectors also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding completed by school staff.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alison Burbage

Ofsted Inspector

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