

St Clare's Catholic Primary School

Garmoyle Close, Liverpool, Merseyside L15 0DW

Inspection dates	26–27 January 2016
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The leadership and management of the school are inadequate. Capacity to improve the quality of teaching and improve outcomes for pupils is poor.
- The headteacher and governors have been too slow to take action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.
- More recently, recommendations from a visit by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors have not been fully implemented.
- Senior leaders do not hold, or share, accurate information on pupils' performance and are therefore unable to plan provision that meets their needs.
- The quality of teaching has only recently begun to improve and is yet to raise pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' achievement by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6 has been below average for several years. It was significantly below average in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling in 2015.
- Boys and disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well enough.
- Governors do not have a full understanding of how well the school's performance compares to that of others. They do not robustly challenge senior leaders to improve the school.
- Early years provision is inadequate. Information on children's performance is inaccurate and is not used effectively to plan activities that enable children to make good progress or build their knowledge, skills and understanding.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils relate to each other well and celebrate and respect each other's cultural and religious traditions.
- Pupils' attendance is above average. They enjoy coming to school, show positive attitudes to learning, and behave well in class.
- There are some strengths in teaching, with early signs of improvement in mathematics and phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) in some classes.
- The majority of parents are very supportive of the school and are of the view that their children are safe and well looked after.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - creating a culture of openness and shared responsibility, to ensure that staff play a full role in raising standards
 - building on the successful work that has improved pupils' behaviour and personal development to create academic success
 - ensuring that there is a whole-school approach for identifying how well all groups of pupils are performing, including those who speak English as an additional language, pupils with disability and those with special educational needs
 - making sure that senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for English and mathematics, use information on pupils' performance to plan provision and improve the progress of all groups of pupils, especially boys and disadvantaged pupils
 - implementing rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of teaching, and ensuring that teachers are fully held to account for the performance of their pupils
 - ensuring all leaders rigorously check that their actions are improving teaching, learning and pupils' progress
 - ensuring that governors have a full understanding of how well the school's performance compares to that of others
 - redirecting governors' energy and ambitions to the weaker areas of the school's performance so they can robustly challenge leaders when the rate of improvement is not quick enough.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it enables all pupils to reach their full potential, especially the most able, and particularly in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - ensuring teachers take full account of what pupils already know and can do, so they plan activities that build on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding
 - developing more frequent opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across other subjects
 - guiding pupils to use accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling in other subjects
 - improving mathematics teaching so pupils are regularly given challenging problems to solve
 - providing more opportunities for teachers to learn from best practice and share their ideas.

- Improve the quality of early years provision by ensuring that information on children's performance is accurately collected and used to plan activities that build on children's knowledge, skills and understanding, so that they make accelerated progress in all areas of learning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. An external review of the use of the pupil premium should be undertaken.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- The school's capacity for improvement is lacking because of inadequate senior leadership. Leaders have not tackled the areas for improvement identified at previous inspections; any changes have been slow and unsustainable. The quality and impact of teaching varies significantly and pupils' progress is poor, especially in mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling. As a result, pupils do not attain well, do not realise their full potential and are not well prepared for their futures.
- Leaders do not check on the quality of teaching frequently enough or in sufficient depth. When teaching is observed, too often the evaluations from senior and middle leaders are overgenerous, with little focus on how well teachers are raising standards for different groups of pupils. This process is hampered by lack of reliable assessment information on pupils' past performance. Shortcomings that leaders find in teaching are not always followed up. Consequently, the quality of teaching is not improving quickly enough.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are in place. However, targets set for teachers are not challenging enough and do not always focus on what individual members of staff need to do to raise standards. For example, recent information on teachers' performance presented to governors indicated that all teachers met their performance targets between 2014 and 2015. This was despite a rapid decline in standards during this time.
- Leaders do not evaluate effectively the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils; any available information is unreliable. Leaders, including governors, are not clear about gaps in performance between groups of pupils, or whether these are closing. This is limiting the school's ability to raise standards.
- The headteacher's plans for improvement lack precision. While plans have been developed to address areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, measurable targets and timescales for improvement are lacking. Similarly, the school's self-evaluation lacks clarity, selectively focusing on minor areas of improvement, rather than the more significant areas of pupils' under-achievement in subjects such as mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Leaders cannot explain fully the effectiveness of government funding in raising standards for disadvantaged pupils and children in the early years. Limited information available at the time of the inspection indicates that disadvantaged pupils in Years 1, 3, and 5 achieve less well than other pupils in all subjects. Pupils enjoy educational trips and visiting museums and local places of interest. Pupils enjoy the performing arts and learn French in Key Stage 2. The curriculum develops their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. Pupils learn about the major world faiths and have a full appreciation of the culturally diverse nature of British society. Most aspects of British values are developed well. Pupils are tolerant and respect each other's difference. Older pupils have an appreciation of democratic principles and participate in the local schools' parliament events.
- Recently, the deputy headteacher, with the support of the governing body, has stepped-up to make some improvements to the quality of mathematics teaching. This has led to some improvements. For example there is evidence of more challenging problem solving work in pupils' books.
- Additional sports funding is used well to increase pupils' participation in a range of sporting activities including dodge ball, tennis, hockey, cricket and athletics. Specialist sports coaches work alongside staff to develop their skills in teaching physical education. The school's silver kite mark for sports has been awarded in recognition of the high quality of pupils' sporting activities in local competitions.
- Most parents are very positive about the school. Those who spoke to inspectors were of the view that their children are safe and well looked after, and that the school's caring Christian ethos helps to make the school harmonious and orderly.
- The school has been in receipt of a lot of support since the previous inspection including from a national leader of education and the Archdiocese of Liverpool. In addition to this, teachers have benefited from training, and working in partnership with local schools. This has helped to improve standards in writing and phonics. However, the support which the school has received has not had sufficient impact on improving outcomes for pupils.
- The local authority has brokered various forms of support, prompted by the school's poor standards. It has carried out a full review of teaching and learning, supported the deputy headteacher onto a leadership programme and accompanied senior and middle leaders on observations of teacher practice. However, this support is yet to fully impact on raising standards.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors have not appreciated fully the significance of the school's test results, which have been weak for several years. This has led to them having an inaccurate view of the school's performance.
 - There is no question about governors' commitment to the school. They attend meetings regularly and participate in half-termly 'challenge board' meetings where governors, senior leaders and stakeholders are required to outline school improvements. However, governors do not have an accurate view of how pupils' performance compares to that of pupils in other schools and have not grasped that outcomes in mathematics and for disadvantaged pupils and boys, are not good.
 - Governors have been asking the right questions but have not been persistent enough in pursuing answers to their questions. Therefore weaknesses in teaching and outcomes have not been addressed with the urgency necessary to ensure their rapid improvement. Governors' over-reliance on information presented to them by the headteacher, has led to their inflated view of the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, actions that they have taken, and approved, are not improving the quality of teaching quickly enough.
 - Governors do not monitor the use of pupil premium funding closely enough. They are aware of how the funding meets pupils' social and emotional needs, but are less aware of the extent to which gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers widened in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015.
 - Governors visit the school regularly; they know that pupils' behaviour is good and that work to ensure that learning takes place in a harmonious and calm environment is effective.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school works closely with a wide range of support services including social services, the police and Liverpool Safeguarding Board to ensure that pupils, and children in the early years, are safe. Stringent procedures are in operation to protect vulnerable pupils. The school has an effective safeguarding team which has benefited from appropriate training. All staff have a good understanding of how to implement safeguarding procedures in the event that a child raises a concern about their safety or well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, including in the early years, varies across the school. Teaching requires improvement because teachers do not always have high expectations of what pupils should achieve, or give them work that deepens their knowledge and understanding. Consequently pupils' progress is too slow, especially in mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Teachers do not routinely plan activities that build on what pupils already know, understand and can do. This is because they do not have access to reliable assessment information on pupils' prior learning. As a result, some pupils find work either too hard, or too easy.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum, as shown in their topic and science books for example. As a result, pupils are not as confident in their writing as they should be. In some year groups, pupils' skills in constructing and correctly punctuating paragraphs and sentences are not in-line with those expected for their age.
- Although outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check in 2015 were much improved on previous years, the quality of phonics teaching, including in the early years, is inconsistent. Where phonics teaching is at its best, teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of pupils; they challenge pupils to read difficult words, ensure that they engage in writing activities and check the quality of pupils' work. However, in other classes, where phonics teaching is weaker, adults sound-out words incorrectly and provide too few opportunities for pupils to refine their spelling skills.
- There have been improvements recently in the quality of teaching, including in mathematics. Work in pupils' books and observations show that pupils are now engaging more in problem-solving activities. This was shown in an upper Key Stage 2 class where pupils were required to plan a trip to France. Using different calculation methods they were able to convert miles to kilometres. However, too few opportunities are available for pupils to try really tricky problems. This holds back the progress of some pupils, particularly the most able.
- Pupils enjoy reading books written in different styles. Less-able pupils use their phonics skills well to sound-out and read unfamiliar words; they say that the extra one-to-one support they receive is helping to improve their reading. However, the reading records of some pupils contain few books, indicating that

they do not read as often as they should.

- The quality of feedback provided to pupils is improving. Most teachers consistently apply the school's marking policy, highlighting the good aspects of pupils' work and giving suggestions on how pupils can improve. Dedicated grammar, punctuation and spelling books focus on developing pupils' basic skills.
- Effective teaching in Year 1 is helping those pupils, who did not acquire the necessary skills by the end of Reception to catch up with their peers.
- The deployment of teaching assistants is becoming more effective. They are actively engaged in pupils' learning during small-group teaching activities.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils work well together to share ideas, tackle problems and talk about their learning. This was evident in an upper Key Stage 2 class where pupils skilfully identified the kind of language and punctuation needed to create a dynamic 'cliff hanging' piece of writing.
- The quality of teaching is beginning to improve, and marking and feedback to pupils is more consistent. Teachers want to improve their practice. Their greater openness in sharing good practice in school and learning from good and outstanding teaching in other schools is helping to improve pupils' outcomes.

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 children in the early years, enjoy coming to school. They appreciate the culturally diverse nature of their school and ensure that it is a peaceful and harmonious place to learn.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and well-looked after. They know that they can talk to any adult if they have a worry or concern, and are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly.
- School procedures for helping those in challenging circumstances to participate fully in all aspects of school life, including educational trips and visits, are good.
- Pupils who are new to the school, including those with little or no English and those new to the country, are made to feel welcome and soon settle into school life.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They have a good understanding of road safety and often wear their high-visibility jackets to go on walks around the school.
- Pupils know how to stay safe while using the internet. They know to always talk to an adult if they are not sure of the safety of a website and are well aware of the dangers of giving out personal information when online. Older pupils know only to visit age-appropriate social networking and gaming sites.
- Pupils know what to do, and where to go, if the fire alarm sounds and have a good understanding of dangers and risks.

Behaviour

- Pupils' attendance is above average; they are punctual and behave responsibly at all times. Pupils are well mannered, polite and very welcoming towards visitors.
- Pupils play together sensibly and move around the school considerately. They treat each other and adults with respect, and take care of their school, ensuring that it is tidy and well looked after.
- Pupils take pride in looking after each other. The school was one of the first schools in Liverpool to be awarded the young carers quality mark.
- Pupils enjoy participating in various sporting and performing arts activities. This was evident when the school choir proudly performed a medley of hymns and gospel songs in preparation for one of their many public performances.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of racism. They know why it is wrong and are adamant that it never happens in school. Their understanding of other forms of bullying, such as homophobia, is less well-developed.
- The curriculum promotes good collaboration and group working. Pupils work well together and are supportive of each other. Observations indicate that pupils are becoming more resilient in their learning. Opportunities to develop their resilience try new things and learn from their mistakes are not widely

available.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- For at least the last three years, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been below average. Pupils' performance in mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling was particularly weak at the end of Year 6 in 2015. There was an improvement in 2014 but this was not sustained.
- The proportion of pupils making expected progress between Year 2 and Year 6 in 2015 was below average in mathematics and reading. Very few pupils attained the higher levels in any subjects at the end of Year 6 in 2015. Work in pupils' books indicates that some teachers are now challenging pupils with harder work, but this is inconsistent across different year groups and subjects.
- The gaps in performance between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are widening at Key Stage 2. In 2015, disadvantaged pupils were over a year behind all pupils nationally in mathematics, and approximately two terms behind in reading and writing. Disadvantaged pupils' progress was below average in mathematics but the same group of pupils made good progress in writing. Assessment information on the current performance of disadvantaged pupils is sketchy.
- The gaps in performance between boys and girls are wider than found nationally. Boys' attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 was below average in 2015. Girls' attainment was much better, especially in Key Stage 1 where it was above average in reading and mathematics and broadly average in writing. Actions taken by senior leaders are not narrowing these gaps quickly enough.
- Insufficient assessment information is available on the performance of pupils with disability and those with special educational needs. Although these pupils are well cared for, inspectors were not able to obtain information on the impact of, for example, the small-group teaching activities which aim to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- The school holds limited assessment information on the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils from minority ethnic groups. Due to the small number from these groups at the end of Year 6 in 2015, it is not possible to make any meaningful comparisons between their performance and that of their peers.
- National data indicate that by the time pupils left school at the end of Year 6 in 2015, they had made good progress in writing. Inspection evidence indicates that the quality of pupils' writing is variable. Good quality teaching in some year groups, for example in Year 1, is helping pupils to catch up and develop their writing skills but this is not consistent across the school.
- An average proportion of pupils were secure in their phonics skills at the national screening check in 2015; this is an improvement on previous years. Pupils who find reading difficult are supported well and enjoy reading.
- From considering the work in pupils' books, along with observations of teaching, inspectors found some improvement in the progress being made by pupils currently on roll. For instance, better teaching of mathematics is helping pupils to develop their problem-solving skills. However, teachers do not have access to reliable assessment information on pupils' past performance; this hampers their ability to tailor teaching to pupils' individual learning needs and so there is no guarantee that pupils' progress is strengthening sufficiently.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- Senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning are irregular, so weaknesses have not been identified or addressed quickly enough.
- Leaders do not have an accurate picture of pupil's progress and attainment. Though expressive art and design and understanding of the world were identified as weaknesses in the 2015 cohort, there is no indication of how these assessments were made, or of plans to prioritise these areas of learning.
- When children are assessed during their first few weeks in the Nursery classes their skills in a number of areas of learning are said to be weak, including in language, communication and personal development. Observations and discussions with children indicate this to be the case.
- In 2014 the proportion of children leaving Reception with a good level of development was much lower than that found nationally, especially for boys. Assessment information for 2015 is unreliable, so it is not

possible to say what proportion of children entered Year 1 with the necessary skills for the next stage in their learning in 2015.

- Little evidence is available to show how additional funding, such as the early years pupil premium, is used to narrow the gaps in children's outcomes. Therefore, no judgement can be made on its impact. This is a serious weakness in the quality of leadership.
- The quality of teaching, including in phonics, is highly variable. While children are eager to learn, and respond well to instructions, inaccurate sounding-out by adults leads to children's repetition of these inaccurate sounds. This does not support children's development well enough for them to make good progress in reading or writing.
- Learning journals contain detailed observations and photographic documentation of children engaging in various activities and practising different skills. This information is shared with parents. However, there are few examples of children's work, so it is not possible to assess how well their early writing and mathematical skills are developing.
- Children enjoy learning and finding out new things; they are cooperative, share toys and take turns. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children engage well with adults, form good and trusting relationships and treat each other kindly and with respect. Children are regularly encouraged to count, improve their social skills and extend their vocabulary through, for example, talking on the telephone.
- Children's behaviour in all classes and groups is good. Staff consistently apply behaviour strategies to ensure that children abide by the rules and learn and play sensibly. Children move around their indoor and outdoor learning and playing areas safely and with due consideration for their peers.
- Staff make sure that children are safe at all times and apply the same effective safeguarding procedures in operation in Key Stages 1 and 2 to the early years provision. Parents are complimentary about staff and their children's experience in the Nursery and Reception classes.

School details

Unique reference number	104648
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10002227

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Aidan Prescott
Headteacher	Kerry O’Sullivan
Telephone number	0151 733 4318
Website	http://www.mystclares.com
Email address	clares-ht@st-clares.liverpool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 December 2013

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils with disability and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is well above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support 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 twice the national average; an above average proportion speak English as an additional language.
- Children in the early years provision attend Nursery on a part-time basis. Children attend the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- 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.
- Since the previous inspection the senior leadership team has been restructured to include an assistant headteacher, two new governors have joined the governing body and there is a new teacher responsible for the provision for pupils with disability, or special educational needs.
- The school experiences high levels of pupil mobility throughout the year. An increasing number of pupils are from minority groups, and many speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read. Joint observations were held with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised in class and separately with senior leaders.
- Inspectors considered 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and met informally with parents at the start of the school day. The school's own surveys of pupils' views were also taken into account, as well as responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by nine members of staff and 47 pupils.
- Inspectors held a meeting with seven governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. They also held meetings with school leaders responsible for English and mathematics, provision for pupils with disability and those with special educational needs, the leader for Key Stage 1, and the leader for early years provision.
- Meetings took place with a representative from the local authority, a national leader for education and a representative from the schools' department of the Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included information about pupils' progress, the school's reviews of its own performance, checks on the quality of teaching, development plans, safeguarding documentation and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

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