

St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Devon Street

Devon Street, St Helens, Merseyside WA10 4HX

Inspection dates	4–5 May 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	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This a good school

- 'This school has come so far in such a small amount of time', a comment from a member of staff, sums up the rapid improvements the school has made over the last two years and in particular since September 2015.
- Pivotal to the school's success has been the highly effective leadership of the recently appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Teaching is now good. Consequently, pupils' progress is accelerating and most pupils now meet the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The vast majority of parents are wholeheartedly supportive of the school's work and are appreciative of the opportunities their children are given.
- Pupils' behaviour has been transformed by high expectations and effective reward systems. Pupils are polite, well-mannered and get along together.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. They are well cared for and they feel safe.
- The curriculum is rich and varied. It provides a good range of learning experiences.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start; they make good progress and are ready for the challenges in Year 1.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is exemplified by the work done with pupils to become eco-citizens.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' academic outcomes, although improving swiftly, are not yet good. Weaker teaching in the past means too many pupils, particularly those in key stage 2, have considerable gaps in their skills and knowledge across the curriculum.
- Some of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are not always being challenged enough to give their very best.
- Pupils' gains in subjects such as science, history, and art are too varied across different classes.
- Some subject leaders have not had enough influence in ensuring that pupils achieve well across the full primary curriculum.
- The systems used to measure how well the school is doing are not used effectively by all governors.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes further by:
 - eradicating the gaps in pupils' learning so that older pupils in particular make consistently better than expected progress
 - ensuring that pupils, most especially those in key stage 2, spell accurately, use punctuation correctly and become fluent mathematicians
 - helping the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to make greater progress so that they exceed the expectations for their age across the curriculum
 - building on recent improvements for pupils who have special educational needs or disability to enable them to make swifter progress
 - ensuring that pupils' gains in other subjects match their strengthening outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Maximise the impact of leaders and managers by ensuring that:
 - all governors, not just those new to the role, fully understand how to measure how well the school is doing
 - subject leaders have a greater influence on the teaching of their subjects so that pupils' skills and understanding, most particularly in science, art and history, deepen as pupils move throughout school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the recently appointed deputy headteacher, has been instrumental in turning the school around. Her high expectations and unwavering insistence on good or better teaching has led to significant change since she started at the school in September 2014. Three quarters of the current teaching staff have joined the school within the last two years. Teachers and leaders have quickly become a dynamic and cohesive team, who are leaving no stone unturned in their quest to provide the best for pupils at St Teresa's. Morale is high and there is renewed energy and determination to take the school from strength to strength.
- Leaders have successfully overcome the considerable barriers which were getting in the way of school improvement. They took decisive and firm action to eradicate weak teaching and ensure that new teachers are well equipped to give pupils a better chance of success. Inevitably, the scale and nature of change has had a negative impact on the speed of improvement in pupils' learning. Those pupils who left Year 6 in 2015 were unable to make up shortfalls in their learning quickly enough and their outcomes were weak.
- September 2015 heralded a new start, and progress has been swift from this point forward. Almost all aspects of the school have improved. As staff commented, 'the school is unrecognisable'. Teaching, particularly the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, is now good and gaps in pupils' learning are being tackled firmly. This signals the school's strong capacity to sustain and build on recent improvements.
- Leaders, including middle leaders, know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well because they keep a close check on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Plans for further improvements are detailed and accurate. However, governors do not always use these plans to measure how well pupils are achieving or to keep track of the school's progress.
- Recently introduced assessment systems are fit for purpose and ensure that information on pupils' achievement is now accurate and reliable. Teachers' skills in measuring pupils' progress have been enhanced through frequent opportunities to work with other teachers in local schools. Consequently, teachers are well placed to build on pupils' prior learning and to spot any gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. Pupils who need to gain ground, or who find learning more difficult, benefit from effective additional support. As a result, pupils' outcomes are improving swiftly and achievement gaps between groups are closing.
- There are robust systems to monitor the quality of teaching. Leaders set targets for teachers which clearly outline how well pupils should be doing. By observing teaching, and regularly checking the range and quality of work in pupils' books, leaders are able to give good advice to teachers on how to improve their performance. The varied training opportunities, coupled with teachers' enthusiasm for and willingness to embrace change, means teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection.
- The curriculum has been transformed over the last two years. It now offers pupils a wide variety of opportunities. For example, pupils in key stage 2 enjoy language lessons each week and they are given opportunities to both write and speak in French. Pupils take part in a number of curriculum enrichment activities, including residential trips and visits to local places of interest. These events make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The relentless focus on reading, writing and mathematics does mean less attention has been placed on other subjects. Although these subjects are taught in line with national curriculum requirements, they are not all sufficiently well planned across all key stages to ensure clear progression of skills and depth of understanding. Subject leaders are only just beginning to have an influence on this aspect of school life.
- The promotion of British values is a strength of the school. Pupils recently took part in celebrations of the Queen's birthday, while older pupils were winners of the local primary school democracy debate.
- Leaders have worked hard to tackle discriminatory behaviour. They have linked gospel values such as 'love one another' to the different ways people live their family lives in modern Britain. As a result, there is an extremely positive culture in school, where everyone feels valued. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The primary school sports funding is used successfully to ensure that pupils are offered a range of clubs and activities, and participation levels have increased. This has included an ice rink, kite-flying and raft-building sessions, as well as securing specialist coaches to develop pupils' skills in a range of sports.
- Pupil premium funding is now being used more effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Booster

classes, additional teaching assistant support, and help from a learning mentor to support families are all helping these pupils in making stronger progress.

- The archdiocese, and in particular the local authority, have offered highly effective support for the school. The training and monitoring activities provided have been most helpful in supporting leaders to bring about improvement and to update teachers' skills.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The make-up of the governing body has changed considerably since the last inspection. Many new governors have joined the school. They bring a range of skills and knowledge that are strengthening their ability to understand the school's position. New governors in particular are skilled in understanding pupils' achievement. They have contributed well to the school's rapid improvement. However, some governors are still not entirely clear about how best to measure the school's success.
 - Governors receive detailed reports and information from a range of sources and make regular visits to school. They have supported the headteacher in challenging weak teaching when this has been necessary. As a result, they are fully aware of the improvements in teaching.
 - Governors set challenging targets for the headteacher. They are aware of the link between teachers' performance and their pay and draw on a range of information to reward good teaching.
 - Members of the governing body know how additional funding is used. They know that the performance of disadvantaged pupils is improving, because they understand the data they receive in relation to the progress of these pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Secure systems are in place, including a range of risk assessments to ensure that pupils are safe. Regular training ensures that all staff are aware of child protection arrangements and the risks from extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- In the past, weak teaching has not helped pupils to make the most of their time in school to learn well. This is no longer the case. Teaching, particularly in relation to reading, writing and mathematics, is now good. Teachers plan learning effectively. They guide pupils skilfully to ensure that they make good progress and overcome gaps in learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They challenge pupils' thinking and allow them opportunities to both practise their skills and deepen their understanding. For example, Year 4 pupils were challenged to predict the answer to a range of mathematical problems using their knowledge of number. They then practised the skills necessary to work out the calculations.
- In key stages 1 and 2, teaching assistants are highly effective in supporting pupils with their learning. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and make a valuable contribution to pupils' rapidly improving progress.
- Teachers appreciate the support they receive to hone their skills in the classroom. They plan interesting lessons, ask probing questions and help pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. Their good subject knowledge means that they teach writing, reading and mathematics effectively across the school.
- Pupils' books show that teachers are very skilled in helping pupils to put their literacy and numeracy skills to good use across other subjects. Teachers expect the same high standards of pupils in terms of work ethic and presentation, regardless of the topic being taught. However, the emphasis on basic skills sometimes overpowers the subject-specific aspects of other curriculum areas. For example, much of the history work is centred on pupils' writing for different purposes. There is less emphasis on shoring up pupils' understanding of timelines, chronology and the use of historical artefacts.
- Reading is taught well. The effective and systematic teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) in the early years and Year 1 creates the secure building blocks for pupils' reading skills.
- Classrooms are attractive and well organised. Pupils' work is celebrated in eye-catching displays and there is a range of prompts on the walls that pupils say help them with their learning.
- Teachers mark pupils' work in line with the school's policy. Pupils are clear that this helps them with their learning. They understand fully how to improve their work when a teacher gives them a 'pink for think' comment. Work in pupils' books shows that feedback is most effective in securing progress in writing.
- Homework is given regularly and is effective in extending learning. Most homework is focused on pupils' learning in English and mathematics. However, displays in school also show practical work that has been undertaken at home. The models pupils recently made to show parts of the body are just one example of the broader range of tasks completed at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There are excellent relationships in school. It is a happy and welcoming place. If pupils are worried, they are encouraged to discuss their feelings with adults and each other. 'Worry boxes' are available in each classroom for pupils to express any concerns. This ensures that there is a supportive environment where everyone feels valued.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. They understand that it can take different forms, including prejudiced bullying. Pupils are clear that bullying is extremely rare and that, if it does occur, it is dealt with very swiftly and effectively.
- The school has worked particularly hard since the previous inspection to eradicate some forms of name-calling, particularly using words such as 'gay' in a derogatory way. Leaders ensure that pupils understand that families are made up in many different ways and that everyone is respected. Pupils confirm that the use of homophobic name-calling is now extremely rare.
- Pupils say they are safe in school and parents agree with this viewpoint. Robust systems ensure that pupils are kept safe. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, around school, when they are on school trips and when they are using the internet.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves healthy. They are taught about healthy eating and there is a range of sporting and outdoor activities available to them.
- Pupils are given a variety of responsibilities, such as eco-committee members and school councillors. Pupils also raise money for charity, for example, pupils recently raised money to support children in Sierra Leone.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good and has improved considerably in the last year.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and a clear reward system ensures that pupils are polite and well mannered. They hold doors open, say 'please' and 'thank you' and behave sensibly in lessons.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. This is reflected in their books, where most pupils present their work neatly.
- The vast majority of parents concur that behaviour has improved considerably in the last year. One parent told inspectors, 'I feel the new reward system truly benefits children, they feel praised and rewarded for their hard work.'
- Attendance is broadly average and improving. Leaders have been particularly successful in reducing the number of pupils who miss large chunks of time away from school. Girls, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability now attend school regularly. This is as a result of the effective work of leaders and the education welfare officer to ensure that parents fully understand the impact of poor attendance on pupils' progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- Outcomes over time have been too variable, rising one year to fall again the next. Pupils' achievement declined sharply in 2015 and standards were well below average. Leaders' work to improve teaching could not make up for the considerable shortfall in pupils' knowledge and skills given the relatively short amount of time available. Year 6 pupils made weak progress overall from their strong starting points when they entered Year 3. Pupils were ill prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils have not been served well in the past. Weak teaching, a stream of temporary teachers and inaccurate assessment information have taken their toll on pupils' learning. Consequently, many pupils, particularly those in key stage 2, have been left with marked gaps in their skills and knowledge.
- However, the tide is turning quickly. Stronger teaching, good use of reliable assessment information and effective small-group catch-up sessions are setting pupils on a steady course to success. The school's own data and the work in pupils' books show that pupils are making accelerated progress since the start of this school year. A much greater proportion of pupils are meeting the expectations for their age. Nonetheless, some older pupils still have considerable ground to cover to ensure that they make better than expected progress by the time they leave Year 6.

- Pupils' achievement in writing has been a constant weakness over time. However, there are clear signs of improvement in the quality and quantity of pupils' writing. Skilful teaching means pupils are gaining the skills to write imaginatively, and often with real flair, for a variety of different purposes. The changes in how writing is taught have had an immensely positive impact on pupils' attitudes to writing. Pupils are no longer reluctant writers. Boys and girls enjoy playing with words and different types of punctuation to give their writing verve and spark the readers' interest. Sentences such as 'the leaves whispered and whistled' and '...all the better to...EAT you with!' can be found in many pupils' writing across different classes. Nevertheless, many older pupils struggle to spell even common words accurately. Not all use the grammar and punctuation techniques they should have grasped by this stage of their education.
- A whole-school focus on basic mathematical skills is reaping rewards in tackling gaps in older pupils' understanding of number and in ensuring that younger pupils gain a feel for number. Pupils are completing calculations with increasing confidence and accuracy. Some pupils are racing ahead. They can apply their understanding of number, shape and measurement to solve challenging problems which make them think hard. These pupils are becoming fluent mathematicians who notice patterns and organise their work systematically. However, this is not replicated in every class. Some children are at the early stages in becoming masters of mathematics.
- Younger pupils have a good grasp of the sounds that letters make, which sets them up well to become successful readers in the future. All groups of pupils achieved well in the 2015 Year 1 phonics check. The refurbished library and new reading materials, including electronic books, are harnessing pupils' desire to read in school and at home. Consequently, pupils' achievement in reading remains a relative strength at St Teresa's.
- The outcomes for different groups of pupils have been too varied in the past. However, gaps are closing quickly. In 2015, disadvantaged pupils had made slower progress than their classmates by the end of Year 6. Consequently, they started their secondary school a considerable distance behind other pupils. Current information shows disadvantaged pupils are now making the same progress as everyone else. There is little difference in the proportions reaching age-related standards. However, within this group, the most able disadvantaged pupils are not always making the gains they could to help them soar. This is also true for the most able pupils who are not disadvantaged. Not enough of these pupils are on track to exceed the standards expected for their age.
- Improvements to systems, procedures and teaching mean that pupils who have special educational needs or disability are now making the progress they should to reach their targets. Some, because of well-planned one-to-one support and step-by-step teaching, are making marked gains in learning. Although this is an improvement, the school recognises that more pupils could make even stronger gains in their learning over time.
- Pupils now have the literacy and numeracy skills to make the most of their learning across the curriculum. However, their achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics is too variable in different classes. Pupils find out about historical events, scientific phenomena and have opportunities to produce different types of art work. However, their skills in these subjects are not built on systematically as they move through the key stages. Consequently, some pupils are not being enabled to flourish as artists, geographers or young scientists who can raise questions and carry out their own scientific investigations.
- Pupils are willing and enthusiastic workers. They seek to do their best and take great pride in their work. They listen attentively, share their ideas and make the most of their time in lessons. Pupils are rising with relish to the higher expectations of competent, confident and committed staff. Pupils' positive attitudes are a key contributor to the brighter future ahead for this school.

Early years provision

is good

- Around three quarters of children enter Reception with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age. Their reading and writing skills stand out as weaker areas.
- Good teaching enables children to catch up quickly and achieve well across almost all areas of learning. Nevertheless, typically, children's grasp of reading and writing skills is just below the national average by the time they leave Reception. The proportion of children who gain a good level of development is above average and increasing slightly each year. A small proportion of children do really well for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Boys and girls leave Reception with a good grounding across the whole curriculum. Their personal and social skills are particularly well developed. This means that they are well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.

- Children enjoy school, cooperate well with their peers, make their own decisions and stay focused on their learning. They are enthusiastic and inquisitive. They follow routines very well; for example, children readily pick their name from the door as they arrive to help the teacher complete the register. They care about each other. This was evident in the concern some pupils showed for their classmate who was feeling poorly.
- Last year, disadvantaged children and boys did not do as well as other groups in the school. However, this is not a typical pattern. Additional funding is used effectively to support these children and to provide additional input when necessary. Children with particular special needs are also well supported.
- Teachers provide a good range of opportunities for children to learn both indoors and out. Children are keen to talk about their learning, for example, when looking at a range of plants one child commented, 'this plant is hairy like spiders'. Another replied, 'they are roots, they suck the water'.
- Children are well looked after and cared for in early years. However, teaching assistants sometimes miss important opportunities to fully engage in questioning and challenging children, especially when they are involved in practical activities.
- Children are comfortable in their environment because there are warm relationships. Children behave as well as others in the school. This supports their readiness to enter key stage 1.
- The procedures for assessing the children are robust. Adults observe and talk to children about their learning. They then move the children on in their learning or create activities to match their interests.
- The early years leader has a good understanding of the progress of individual children and the areas of the curriculum to improve further to foster even stronger learning. However, other senior leaders do not always fully understand how best to measure the progress children make in Reception. This means they cannot hold the early years leader to account robustly enough.
- Relationships with parents are good and parents say they value the chance to talk to staff each morning. One parent commented, 'We find the staff to be extremely approachable and knowledgeable about our child.'
- Pupils are extremely safe and staff ensure that rigorous safeguarding policies are kept up to date and implemented fully.

School details

Unique reference number	104807
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10012149

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	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joan Ashcroft
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Rebecca Flynn
Telephone number	01744 678667
Website	www.st-teresas.st-helens.sch.uk
Email address	stteresa@sthelens.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2014

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium funding is slightly higher than the national average.
- There have been a number of staffing changes since the last inspection. This includes a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. There have also been five changes to the teaching staff, including newly appointed key stage leaders. The deputy headteacher has dedicated management time.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2015, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets the requirements for publishing information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in lessons, including one observation carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading. They looked at examples of pupils' work and observed pupils at lunchtime and breaktimes.
- The inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and representatives from St Helens local authority and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool. They spoke to parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors took account of 35 questionnaires returned by staff. There were 14 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including data on pupils' current progress across the school, the school's view of its own effectiveness, and how the school checks on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The inspectors checked the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and looked at records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- Her Majesty's Inspector and an Ofsted inspector made a further visit to the school on 7 June 2016 to gather additional evidence about pupils' outcomes.

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