

St Philip's CofE Controlled Primary School

Church Road, Litherland, Liverpool, Merseyside L21 8NZ

Inspection dates

28–29 June 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 headteacher, senior leaders and governors have secured improvements in teaching. Their shared vision and values pervade the school.
- Training and professional development for staff is strong, enabling teachers to improve their practice. As a result, pupils' outcomes are improving.
- Teachers deploy other adults in their classrooms well. As a result, pupils receive help quickly and their learning continues at a good pace.
- Policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe are effective and well implemented by all members of staff.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and is at the heart of everything the school does.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school and their parents agree wholeheartedly.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They want to achieve and show good learning habits in school. They cooperate with each other well.
- Early years provision is good. Children settle quickly, enjoy learning and make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding because the most able pupils do not achieve the highest levels in tests and examinations. This is because not all teachers give pupils enough opportunities to work without support on challenging work.
- Teachers' use of the school's new assessment system is not yet effective in driving progress consistently across all year groups.
- Too few teachers use their assessment information of pupils' previous understanding with sufficient precision to plan pupils' learning. This slows progress for some pupils.
- Outdoor provision for children in the early years does not provide enough opportunities for them to take risks safely and to decide for themselves where and how they wish to learn.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching further, by ensuring that:
 - pupils, especially the most able, develop the resilience to tackle challenging work without the support of adults and thereby reach the highest levels in tests and examinations
 - teachers use assessment information precisely to plan activities that take account of pupils' previous learning, so that they make even faster progress, especially in the case of the most able.
- Enhance the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the school's new assessment system is consistently well used across the school and is driving pupils' progress even faster across all year groups
 - improving the quality of outdoor provision for children in the early years, so that they have more opportunities to take carefully planned risks safely and make their own choices about where and how they wish to play next.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has a very clear vision, shared by other leaders and governors, for the school's improvement. This is based on an accurate and honest self-evaluation of the school's work. She has focused the whole staff on working with determination to complete the journey towards becoming a good school again.
- Through many necessary changes, the headteacher has maintained the respect not only of the staff, including the very able senior leadership team, but of both parents and pupils. They are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work.
- Senior and middle leaders and other staff have embraced the high expectations that the headteacher has set for the school. Processes for holding staff to account for pupils' progress are now much tighter than previously. New, more robust strategies have also been developed to check the quality of teaching, with the result that it is now good.
- Teachers are well supported and challenged to improve their practice. They appreciate the many opportunities that they have to see good practice through high-quality training provided by the local authority and the Strand cluster of local schools.
- Senior leaders add much capacity to the potential for the school's improvement. They, together with governors, have a clear knowledge of the strengths and areas for further development in teaching and in other aspects of the school's work. The school's new, robust tracking systems show that although there is some variation between subjects and year groups, most pupils are now beginning to make better progress than previously in most subjects.
- Senior leaders have developed an exciting new curriculum in order to meet the higher demands of the new national arrangements and the interests, learning needs and aspirations of all pupils. Pupils enjoy the wide choice of sports that they have at breaks and lunchtimes. Pupils say that there is always something to do.
- Pupils also greatly appreciate visits to places of interest. For example, a visit to a local synagogue has contributed greatly to their understanding of other nearby faith communities.
- The school has responded positively to national changes in assessment. A new, rigorous system of assessing pupils' progress has been developed in reading, writing, mathematics and science, and is set to be extended to other subjects in the near future. However, the system needs time to be applied consistently across the whole school in order to drive pupils' progress faster.
- The range of strategies provided through the physical education (PE) and sport funding is evident, for example, in pupils' increasing enjoyment of regular physical activity. Year 5 pupils were highly motivated in a PE lesson by using a wealth of new resources to create original and imaginative games for younger pupils.
- The impact of the school's use of pupil premium funding is evident, for instance, in the breakfast club that has significantly improved the attendance of this group of pupils. (The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or for children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- Current pupils across the school, who are supported by the pupil premium, make progress in reading, writing and mathematics that is at least similar to that of their peers and sometimes above it.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body, strengthened by new members from a wide range of professional backgrounds, is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for development. This is because they are frequent visitors to the school. They tour the school to update themselves on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They also attend meetings where the quality of pupils' written work is checked.
 - Records of governing body meetings show the very robust challenge they make to senior leaders, especially on financial and academic matters. Governors know how the pupil premium is spent and the impact it has had on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and governors take their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe and secure very seriously. The single central record is fully compliant with requirements for all adults associated with the school. Child protection procedures are robust and staff are regularly updated on 'Prevent' training. 'Prevent' is an element of the government's strategy to help to prevent people from being drawn into extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection because of the commitment of senior leaders to providing good-quality training. This is based on regular monitoring of teaching and learning, which has been tailored to each teacher's needs.
- Relationships between pupils and the adults who teach them are very positive. Pupils trust staff. They are confident to answer and ask questions knowing that it is safe to make mistakes. Pupils know they will be given good guidance if they are wrong.
- Teachers take pride in their attractive and welcoming classrooms. Good-quality work completed by pupils is displayed in classrooms and around the school to celebrate their success and show others what is possible. Inspectors saw some very impressive art work and examples of carefully presented and sophisticated writing, given pupils' starting points. The variety of displays is not as rich in key stage 1 as it is in key stage 2.
- Teachers comply consistently with the school's marking policy, but not all teachers check routinely whether pupils have followed their advice. Errors and misconceptions therefore remain in pupils' books and this does not provide a good model for pupils' future learning.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning skilfully to check on pupils' learning and deepen their thinking.
- New ways of working in mathematics have encouraged teachers to develop pupils' resilience to try to find ways of solving their own problems. Pupils visibly relish tackling challenging tasks and activities. The school is aware that this practice is not securely in place across all classes, so that all pupils, especially the most able, have opportunities to be stretched by this challenging work.
- Teachers are becoming accustomed to the school's new arrangements for assessing pupils' progress. They can use the information from tracking systems to plan for pupils' progress, but they do not all take account of what pupils already know and understand to drive pupils' progress even faster. The system is at an early stage of development and needs time to be established consistently across the school.
- Teachers are mindful of the need to support pupils in becoming confident speakers and listeners. Both speaking and listening skills are promoted well by teachers, who give pupils many opportunities to work together and discuss their ideas.
- The teaching of writing, including that of boys, has improved since the national tests in 2015. The tools of writing, including spelling and handwriting, are taught methodically. The way that teachers link tasks in topic work imaginatively to other subjects is a strength of the school. Another strength is teachers' insistence on pupils' use of accurate technical language required for each subject.
- Pupils have good opportunities to write for a wide range of relevant and interesting purposes. One group of pupils were excited by writing a letter giving their views on environmental issues to the Prime Minister. They were delighted to receive a reply.
- The children are enthusiastic readers of a wide range of books. They were proud to read excerpts from their current reading and from their own writing for inspectors. Most pupils read accurately and fluently from their starting points. They draw effectively on strategies they have learned, in order to read unfamiliar words and correct themselves when they stumble. Pupils who have fallen behind in their reading are well supported by a range of programmes, rapidly catching up with their peers.
- Homework is used effectively for a range of purposes, including practising learning done in school and giving pupils opportunities to research and pursue their interests.
- Most parents responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, expressed few concerns about the quality of homework and agree that their children are well taught at the school.

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' personal development is strongly promoted through the school's very rich curriculum. They are courteous and friendly as well as confident in speaking with visiting adults.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from risk, for example through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils have many opportunities, through visiting speakers, for example, to learn about the various risks involved in using the internet.
- Attendance has improved rapidly since the previous inspection and is now close to the national average. There have been very few exclusions over the last three years and then only for the most serious misdemeanours.
- The school's strong moral ethos and core values underpin all aspects of its work. In particular, this ethos supports pupils' good understanding of British values very effectively. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities to reflect on deep concepts in different subjects, as well as through PSHE and in religious education. Pupils visibly enjoy discussions about spiritual, moral and social questions and apply what they have learned in their daily relationships with their teachers and classmates.
- Pupils are outward looking and fully aware of their rights as children. They are keen to take responsibility, for example as members of the school council. In this way, they gain an early awareness of democratic values. Pupils also sometimes participate in the recruitment of teachers and older pupils teach younger ones to sing in assemblies.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors were clear that they feel very happy and safe in and around school, and parents wholeheartedly agree.
- The school's inclusive ethos leads to strong partnerships with a range of specialist agencies to support the physical, mental, emotional and social needs of its most vulnerable pupils. The school's aim is that as many such pupils as possible learn alongside their peers in mainstream classrooms. To this end, all adults work closely with teachers to ensure that pupils can play a full part in tasks and activities.
- In the rare cases where learning away from the school for a short period is the best option for a pupil's education, the school liaises closely with the provider to ensure good attendance, behaviour and progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils bring positive attitudes to their learning, being curious and imaginative. They work harmoniously and diligently together. Pupils wear their uniform smartly and take care in the presentation of their work. Pupils do all that they can to help keep the school tidy. They arrive on time for school and are well equipped and ready to work.
- Pupils do not take the initiative in their learning, for example in using classroom resources before asking for their teachers' help. This sometimes impedes their progress in tests and examinations where they are expected to work without support.
- Pupils say that there is very little bullying. Where it occurs, pupils know that they can turn to a range of adults who will help them. On the few occasions when bullying has happened, it has been carefully recorded and followed up with parents.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection and persistent absence has also reduced dramatically. This is because leaders have spared no effort in developing a wide range of strategies to encourage parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Judgements about pupils' starting points, on entering Reception, are based on locally and nationally recognised tests. Outcomes are moderated internally by the early years foundation stage team and externally by the local authority.
- The school deems the children's starting points to be broadly typical for their age group and inspectors agree. However, many children bring with them deficits in mathematics. By the end of the Reception Year, a higher proportion of children than is found nationally achieve a good level of development across the key learning areas.

- Pupils' performance in the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) dipped below the national average in 2015, for both boys and girls. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils were better than for other pupils. Senior leaders have since made changes to the organisation of classes and pupils' outcomes in phonics this year are improving for all groups.
- Overall standards of reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2015 were broadly in line with national averages and showing improvement. Boys' standards and those of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were also broadly in line with national averages. Gaps in attainment narrowed for disadvantaged pupils and for those who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. This represents good progress from pupils' starting points.
- In 2015, senior leaders were aware that a legacy of weak teaching and a series of staffing difficulties were having a negative impact on pupils' progress in Year 6. Leaders put in place a range of extra support, which was more effective in improving writing than in reading and mathematics. Consequently, standards in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 6 were significantly below average. Staffing changes made by senior leaders ensure that teachers are now placed with classes where they can be most effective and this has begun to raise standards.
- In 2015, most pupils made the progress expected of them. Pupils of lower ability made faster progress than the most able and pupils supported by the pupil premium. Relatively few pupils made more than expected progress. In writing, pupils of all abilities made progress that was in line with or above national averages.
- In mathematics, although there was a dip in overall progress, gaps narrowed significantly for the most able disadvantaged pupils and others nationally. Attainment and progress of the relatively small proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities fluctuate year on year. The school nurtures these pupils particularly well, so that in 2015 their progress was broadly in line with that of other pupils in the school.
- The school's new systems for tracking pupils' progress are robust. Assessment is now based on expectations appropriate to pupils' ages. The judgements that teachers and leaders make about pupils' attainment are founded on solid evidence from tests, middle and senior leaders' observations of teaching and learning, and regular checks on work in pupils' books.
- The school's own information from these processes confirms the school's assessment information to be accurate. Pupils' work in lessons and in their books, seen during the inspection, show that overall, the majority of pupils are reaching standards that are typical for their age and this represents good progress from their starting points. Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium often outperform other pupils, in school and nationally, confirming the school's wise use of this funding. Senior leaders are aware that there is still variation between the standards reached in different year groups.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is strong because its leader manages it well and has high expectations of both staff and children. Her tightly knit and well-qualified team is knowledgeable about the needs of young children. Staff make early visits to children in their home settings. This helps staff to begin to assess children's needs and understand what kind of activities they enjoy. This knowledge, together with the early forging of close links with parents, helps to secure a smooth transition for children from their early years settings into Reception.
- Staff are well supported by a robust tracking system. This ensures that any problems the children may have are quickly identified and acted on. Children therefore settle quickly into Reception, where they make the most of their time and are therefore well prepared for Year 1.
- Children gain the skills to be successful learners because the provision in Reception captures their interest. Staff focus particularly on ensuring that children make up any deficits that they bring with them, for example in their mathematical understanding.
- Strong attention is given to the development of children's listening and speaking skills. Some examples of children's good emerging writing are displayed around the early years area, and resources reflect the diversity of modern Britain. Children are happy and curious about their learning in tasks and activities, all of which provide an element of literacy or numeracy practice.
- Children quickly develop effective social and emotional skills. They show confidence in making positive relationships with each other and with adults. They are kind and patient with each other and work harmoniously together, sharing resources and listening to the views of others.

- Senior leaders know that the outside space does not provide a real contrast with experiences provided in the inside area. Children do not have enough opportunities to experience risks safely and make their own decisions about where they wish to learn and play next.
- Children make good progress across all areas of learning because of the seamless teamwork of adults and their skills in asking appropriate questions to move children's learning forward. Scrutiny of the children's work shows evidence of their good progress towards achievement of a good level of development and of other areas of learning.
- Most children enter Reception with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Those who do not have these skills on entry catch up quickly because of the high-quality support that they receive.

School details

Unique reference number	104898
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10012152

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Garner
Headteacher	Marian Hodgson
Telephone number	0151 928 1483
Website	www.stphilipsprimaryschool-litherland.co.uk
Email address	Head.StPhilipsLitherland@schools.sefton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 June 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is just above average.
- The school makes limited use of Jigsaw, a local pupil referral unit.
- The headteacher will retire at the end of the school year and a new headteacher has been appointed with effect from September 2016.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, some of which were undertaken jointly with the senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' written work during their observations, and also considered separately a further sample of pupils' written work from a range of classes and subjects.
- Inspectors looked at 16 responses to Parent View. It was not possible to access pupils' responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. Inspectors spoke instead with pupils in formal interviews and lessons, and informally at lunchtimes and breaktimes. They also considered the school's own surveys of pupils' and parents' views.
- Meetings were held with school staff, including the headteacher and other senior leaders, as well as with teachers in charge of subjects. Inspectors also met the chair and members of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of the local primary pupil referral unit where a very small number of pupils are currently supported.

Inspection team

Susan Wareing, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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