

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Adswood Road, Huyton, Liverpool L36 7XR

Inspection dates

13–14 September 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

- St Aidan's has greatly improved since its previous inspection. The determination of the headteacher has driven the improvements in the school.
- The 'family feel' of the school is valued by pupils and makes a significant contribution to their success.
- Raised expectations and improvements in the quality of teaching throughout the school have resulted in all pupils making at least good progress.
- The enthusiasm of the acting deputy headteacher and growing confidence of curriculum leaders are having a positive impact on the school's capacity to improve further.
- The governing body provides effective support and challenge to the school. It makes a valuable contribution to moving the school forward.
- Pupils rise to teachers' expectations and benefit from the good teaching they receive throughout the school. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they check on pupils' learning regularly.
- Pupils enjoy and benefit enormously from the high-quality physical education they receive.
- Pupils conduct themselves very well around school. Their friendliness and politeness embody the school's values, summed up in the following phrase: 'spreads happiness with a smile'.
- The caring ethos within school is shown strikingly by the way older pupils care for younger ones.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel very safe. Parents agree.
- Leadership and teaching in the early years are strengths. As a result, children have an excellent start to school life and make strong progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics does not match that in reading and writing. Sometimes the teaching of mathematics does not capture and sustain the interest of pupils sufficiently. Pupils are not always challenged to think more deeply and practise their reasoning skills.
- Checks on the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not precise enough. As a result, school leaders do not always have a clear overview of their overall progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics, so that pupils' achievement matches that in reading and writing, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - challenge pupils in lessons, including the most able pupils, to think more deeply about their work and practise their reasoning skills
 - capture pupils' interest, so that they are fully engaged and their attention is sustained.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that leaders:
 - more accurately assess and track the overall progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - increase the range of ways in which pupils who have fallen behind in mathematics can catch up in their learning, so that all pupils make good progress in this subject.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- St Aidan's has much improved since the previous inspection. This has been down to the determination of the headteacher, other senior leaders and the governing body to raise standards. Their focus, vision and hard work have led the way so that, together with staff, they provide good opportunities for pupils to achieve and develop as well-rounded individuals.
- Through the school's 'Golden Values', leaders have promoted equality and diversity well. This has resulted in pupils who are caring, considerate and respectful of each other and the wider community.
- Leaders have the commitment of staff, parents and pupils. Staff are all motivated to make sure there is continual improvement. Relationships between staff are positive; they are proud to work at St Aidan's. The very large majority feel well supported and that school is led and managed well.
- Senior leaders know their school well. The strengths of the school and areas for improvement are clearly identified in their self-evaluation, which is accurate, honest and reflective. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are thorough. Where needed, follow-up is immediate, yet sensitive and supportive. Staff are encouraged to work together to develop the school, resulting in staff that feel motivated and part of its growing success. The school benefits from a stable, happy and dedicated team.
- The new acting deputy headteacher and the growing confidence of other leaders in the school create a sense of enthusiasm for continued school improvement. Leaders have regular opportunities to check that agreed strategies to secure improvement are being applied by all the staff. This has led to a growing consistency of approach in classrooms, for example in the drive to improve reading and writing, using the agreed marking policy and the use of reading texts to support the development of writing.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to reduce any barriers to learning that may be experienced by disadvantaged pupils, including the most able. This enables disadvantaged pupils to be successful and be part of everything the school has to offer. The progress of pupils supported by this funding is monitored well. The impact of pupil premium funding is evaluated regularly by the headteacher and the governors.
- The primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding is also used well. Pupils benefit from a high-quality specialist sports teacher and say how much they enjoy sport and find lessons fun. Pupils of all ages recognise the value of physical activity as a part of being healthy. There are also many opportunities for pupils to be involved in a wide range of other sporting activities, both within the school day and after school.
- Accelerating and improving outcomes for pupils is a constant focus. Senior leaders and the governing body have worked hard to improve the way pupils are assessed and their progress is tracked. Assessment information is used regularly by senior leaders to talk to teachers about pupils' learning and to plan opportunities to help pupils catch up if needed. Leaders have also built in a number of occasions for teachers to discuss their assessments with each other and with teachers in other schools. As a result, teachers' assessment of pupils' work is accurate.

- The leadership and organisation of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is for the most part effective. Identification of need is appropriate and resources are of a good standard, ensuring that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities succeed in their learning and their personal and social development. The systems and procedures are in place for teachers to check the progress of individual pupils; however, leaders are not sufficiently informed of pupils' progress to enable them to identify when there is a risk of individuals falling behind.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum that engages pupils and contributes to their enjoyment of learning. Physical education and science are strengths and pupils make particularly good progress in these subjects. The curriculum is also enriched by additional opportunities for pupils to experience a wide range of clubs and interests. Reading and writing are woven across the curriculum, increasingly effectively, to strengthen pupils' skills, add richness to their reading and have a sense of purpose for their writing.
- Well-promoted spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that the school is a calm environment where pupils are considerate and mix happily together. Through assemblies and the curriculum, pupils learn about the wider community, raise funds for charities and learn about tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. Pupils also enjoy taking on responsibilities such as being members of the school council and playtime leaders. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how older pupils are responsible for helping younger pupils read.
- A small number of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, expressed a wish for a better response to concerns that they raise. The inspection team found that the school does offer a number of ways to communicate with parents and is active in sharing changes and the reasons behind them. Leaders are keen to seek new approaches to cater for the varying needs of the school community.
- The local authority and the archdiocese have productive relationships with the school. They have provided appropriate and helpful support when needed. The headteacher has also sourced other beneficial external support and evaluation as needed. The school is an active member of a network of schools. They support each other, for example by providing opportunities for curriculum leaders to meet and discuss teaching and learning. They have also worked closely together to develop practice and checks with regard to assessment.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school has improved significantly since the last inspection.
 - Governors know their school well and are confident and skilled in asking challenging questions. Their expertise has been used very well to ensure that it benefits the school.
 - The governing body has a good understanding of performance management procedures and, as well as supporting the headteacher in holding staff to account, it ensures the management of teachers' pay is effective.
 - Governors are conscientious and take part in all relevant training. They have good levels of understanding about the progress pupils are making. The governing body

makes sure that the pupil premium and the primary PE and sport funding are spent effectively and make a difference to pupils.

- The governing body is diligent in its responsibilities to safeguard pupils and to this end have appointed a safeguarding governor to oversee and monitor safeguarding and welfare-related matters. The governing body also understands its responsibilities with regard to internet safety and has ensured filtering measures are in place for the school's internet and online services.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Robust systems are in place, which are understood by all staff. Up-to-date and appropriate training for staff is undertaken and is regularly revisited. Safeguarding is a high priority in school, particularly the care and welfare of vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders are persistent in cases where the school is concerned for a pupil's welfare. Effective relationships with other agencies and with parents ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- There have been improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school. As a result, teaching is now good. This has led to pupils making good progress.
- Staff model high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. The vast majority of pupils rise to these by working hard and behaving well. Pupils enjoy their learning and say that they particularly like 'reading and writing stories'. They also say that their teachers make the class feel 'like one big family'.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Many adults ask just the right questions to aid pupils' thinking, draw out learning and help them move on. Mistakes are seen by staff and pupils as another opportunity for pupils to learn. In mathematics, and particularly with the most able pupils, some teachers do not ask appropriate questions, so pupils are not offered a chance to deepen their thinking, reasoning and understanding of what is being taught.
- Teachers and leaders check on pupils' learning regularly. Overall systems are clear, simple and effectively used by teachers. This makes an important contribution to the progress pupils make, particularly in reading and writing. For example, assessments are discussed each half term, providing the opportunity to identify and plan precisely for each pupil's needs. This results in teaching that offers the right level of challenge for most pupils. In mathematics, teachers sometimes do not plan demanding enough activities, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Where pupils struggle with their learning, an effective range of learning opportunities helps them catch up. This is particularly effective in reading. As a result, pupils make good progress. The range of interventions in mathematics is not wide enough to help pupils catch up successfully.

- Teaching assistants in key stages 1 and 2 are deployed effectively. They are knowledgeable and skilled and make a good contribution to the learning of the pupils with whom they work.
- For those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the support they are offered is broad, clearly targeted and of good quality. Additional support is planned well, resulting in these pupils making good progress in most lessons.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, in line with the school's policy. They make clear to pupils what they have done well and offer clear guidance to help them improve their work further. Pupils are keen to get their teacher's feedback and have time to respond to the comments made.
- The development of reading and writing is a high priority in the school and their importance is evident in classrooms, corridors and shared areas. Leaders' insistence on a consistent approach to reading and writing throughout the school has had a positive effect on pupils' progress in these subjects.
- Reading texts are used effectively in each class to create a range of interesting and stimulating activities that help pupils to learn and practise their skills. This approach has been a very effective way of capturing pupils' interest in reading and writing. Pupils said that they were highly motivated and this showed through in their work. For example, pupils have really enjoyed finding out about Roald Dahl and reading his books. These stories have been used to encourage pupils to write imaginatively using similarly vivid language to that employed by the author.
- The development of mathematical skills is also a priority in school. The school has made less progress in this area, however, because teachers have less confidence in providing lessons that challenge pupils to understand and deepen their learning. Activities are sometimes repetitive and do not capture or sustain pupils' interest sufficiently.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View or spoke to inspectors in the playground felt that their children were taught well and most felt that their child made good progress in school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The importance placed on pupils' personal development and welfare is evident in all aspects of school. Staff and governors are diligent in their responsibility to ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment in which pupils in their care can flourish and succeed.
- Staff treat pupils with consideration and ensure that the school makes everyone feel welcome and valued. Adults model respectful and caring behaviour in lessons, around school and in the way they engage with pupils. As a result, pupils develop as thoughtful and compassionate citizens. Pupils are comfortable and happy to speak to adults and are keen to smile, say 'hello' and hold doors open for adults and each other.

- The large majority of parents spoken with by inspectors, and those that responded to Parent View, expressed praise for the school and the work of the staff. The vast majority of parents felt that their children were happy, safe and well looked after.
- The majority of pupils throughout key stage 2, and an increasing number in key stage 1, are confident learners and are happy to talk about their learning. The pupils told inspectors how proud they are of their school and how well looked after they are by adults. They also talked with pride about helping each other in their learning and looking after each other in the playground. For example, if pupils use the prayer garden when they feel sad, other pupils will come over and talk and sit with them.
- Pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well catered for. There is a prompt focus on early identification of need or concern and things are put in place quickly to support pupils. This reduces the barriers to learning that pupils might face and ensures that they make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities participate fully in all that the school has to offer.
- Pupils spoken with during the inspection were clear about what bullying is and said that incidents are rare and always dealt with promptly by an adult. They were confident that teachers deal quickly with any unkind or negative language towards pupils. A few parents did not feel that bullying is dealt with suitably, but the majority of parents who responded to Parent View felt that bullying is dealt with appropriately or that they are not aware of any bullying towards their child. Other inspection evidence confirmed that this is the case.
- Pupils were unanimous in their view that they feel safe in school and could share with inspectors many examples of how the school keeps them safe, for example road safety, fences and 'adults in the yard'. Pupils talked about assemblies and lessons where they have been taught about how to keep themselves safe, personally and online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well. They are polite and well mannered. Staff and pupils know each other well and are friendly and supportive. As a result, school is a calm, orderly and purposeful place to learn. For example, at playtimes and lunchtimes, older pupils are often seen playing with younger ones and the younger pupils are confident to ask their older peers for help or assistance.
- Pupils are encouraged, from the Nursery to Year 6, to take pride in their appearance. They are very proud of their uniform and ensure they are tidy at all times. If a shirt becomes untucked or a tie has gone awry, a friend will often alert them.
- In the vast majority of instances, there is a productive atmosphere in the classrooms, with pupils having a positive attitude and visibly enjoying their learning. They are attentive and eager to participate in lessons and generally work well supporting each other. In a small number of lessons, however, particularly in mathematics, pupils' concentration and interest in their tasks wane. This is because activities are not sufficiently interesting, engaging and, in some instances, challenging.
- Pupils are fully aware of how to behave and the consequences of poor behaviour. They say that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are rare, dealt with quickly by teachers

and responded to by pupils sensibly. A number of pupils have behavioural needs and they are well supported to ensure that their behaviour does not get in the way of their learning and does not distract others.

- Pupils have a high level of attendance. This represents improvement over the last three years. The systems for checking absence are rigorous and effective. Good attendance is rewarded and has a high profile in school. The occasional pupil who is persistently absent is identified quickly and appropriate support ensures that they are soon back on track. A change in the timings and organisation of the school day has had an immediate and very positive effect on pupils being on time and ready to start their lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' achievement throughout the school has improved and overall their achievement is now good. This is because of the determination of senior leaders and governors to raise expectations and to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in reading and writing.
- Children start school in the early years with skills, knowledge and understanding below those typical for children of their age.
- In 2015, at the end of key stage 2, most pupils made the expected progress and many made more than the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2016, pupils in key stage 2 continued to make good progress, most notably in reading and writing. Mathematics was not as strong in 2016. Nevertheless, the school's in-year tracking of progress and the work in current pupils' books confirms a rapidly improving picture.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, pupils attained particularly well in reading and writing. In previous years, pupils had attained well in mathematics and English grammar, spelling and punctuation. However, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard this year was unexpectedly low. Leaders have taken decisive action which is already having a positive impact on teachers' planning in these subjects and on pupils' learning.
- Achievement has greatly improved in 2016 at the end of key stage 1, with a higher proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. A number of pupils also achieved higher than the expected standards under the new national curriculum.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the national screening check for phonics at the end of Year 1 continues to be above average.
- The teaching of phonics is consistent and strongly linked to the good development of reading skills. As a result, pupils enjoy reading and talk excitedly about books. Pupils that struggle with reading have very good support to practise their skills and are proud of the progress they make.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, they make good progress in key stages 1 and 2. The most able disadvantaged pupils achieve well and make at least good progress. This group of pupils do well in school

because teachers effectively monitor their progress and ensure that they are supported well in class.

- Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. The support offered by teachers and teaching assistants is effective and ensures that pupils succeed in their learning.
- Overall in 2015, at the end of key stage 2, the most able pupils made at least the progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics and many attained higher levels in all three subjects. In 2016, however, this group of pupils did not achieve as well. Leaders have quickly responded and put strategies in place to regain the standards of which the school's most able pupils are capable.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in a number of subjects other than English and mathematics are good. Pupils are consistently assessed in all areas of learning. This is most developed in science and physical education, however, where it is clear that pupils are making good progress. Other subjects such as music, modern foreign languages, history and geography are developing to a similar standard.

Early years provision

Good

- There are a number of strengths in early years provision.
- Many children start school with skills and knowledge below that which is typical for their age and make good progress. They benefit from a vibrant and stimulating environment in which to learn. This is coupled with high expectations by adults to make sure that children thrive and enjoy a very positive start to school life.
- There have been steady improvements in children's achievement since the last inspection. Children are well prepared and confident to start in Year 1.
- The leadership of the early years is a strength. There is a clear view about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Where actions have been taken to tackle issues, these have been successful. A focus on the importance of good-quality training and development of staff has ensured that adults are highly skilled and are confident to get the best learning from children.
- Provision is very well organised to create a rich and varied learning environment for all children, both inside the classroom and outdoors. Activities are fun, capture the children's imagination and allow them to practise their skills. Children have plenty of opportunity to explore with a range of equipment that encourages them to build, create and try out their ideas. For example, a child was keen to share with an adult that he was 'a triceratops pulling a trailer'. The adult took this cue to explore with the child about how he walked, how he would pull the trailer and what, as a triceratops, he would need to carry.
- Additional funding is used well to provide resources and support for disadvantaged children. Leaders have a good understanding of the impact this has on children's learning. Children make similarly good progress to that made by other children and achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Although it is early in the term, routines

are already well established, as is a high level of expectation of what children will achieve. Adults demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and a thorough knowledge of child development. The importance placed on reading, writing and mathematical skills is very evident, with regular chances for children to write, practise their letters and sounds, and use number. The development of language and speaking is also a high priority. Adults engage with children very well and are skilled at asking questions to draw out children's understanding and encourage them to talk.

- Teachers' assessment and the tracking of children's learning are of a high quality. Baseline assessments are completed within the first week of a child starting school so that this information can be used very effectively to plan a curriculum for children that is both interesting and relevant. Learning and activities are often led by children. For example, during the inspection, the class teacher capitalised on a child's spontaneous idea to make pizzas. Children delighted in discussing what they would like as toppings and were excited to think that the teacher would bring the requested ingredients in the next day.
- Safeguarding is effective. Risk assessments are thorough and the classroom is a safe environment for children. Children's behaviour is good and adults are quick to provide support to children to help them understand the importance of being polite and treating one another with respect. Children play and learn together well and are very motivated to learn.
- The strong emphasis on creating a caring and nurturing environment is evident from the very positive relationships adults have with children, and children have with each other. There are also very positive relationships between early years staff and parents, who describe the early years as 'warm and welcoming'. Parents are full of praise for how well their children have settled into school and the progress they have made.

School details

Unique reference number	104463
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10019782

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annette Brannan
Headteacher	Moira Kenneway
Telephone number	0151 477 8370
Website	www.staidanscatholicprimary.com/
Email address	staidan@knowsley.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 October 2014

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- A breakfast club is run by the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors observed pupils in the playground and during lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and in the learning journals of children in the early years.
- An inspector listened to a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, early years leader and curriculum leaders.
- An inspector met with the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body. A meeting was also held with representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese of Liverpool.
- A group of pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with an inspector, and inspectors also spoke informally with pupils in the playground and around school.
- The inspectors took account of responses to a questionnaire by 22 staff.
- Inspectors considered the 11 responses from the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked briefly with parents before school and took account of recent parental questionnaires collected by the school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including minutes from meetings of the governing body; information on pupils' attainment and progress; the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Moira Atkins

Ofsted Inspector

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