

St Teresa's Catholic Infant and Nursery School

Everton Road, Birkdale, Southport, Merseyside PR8 4BT

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| Inspection dates | 1–2 November 2016 |
| Overall effectiveness | Inadequate |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Requires improvement |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Inadequate |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Requires improvement |
| Outcomes for pupils | Inadequate |
| Early years provision | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- For too long, the culture of the school has been one of complacency. Too few pupils reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1.
- Teaching is weak. Teachers' low expectations mean that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, as well as the most able and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not make the progress they should.
- Too often pupils lose concentration in lessons and become restless because the work they are given does not capture their interest.
- The quality of teaching of phonics is inconsistent. Although results have improved, too many pupils are still not reaching the expected standard in Years 1 and 2.
- Teachers do not plan lessons which give pupils enough opportunities to practise their writing, hone their reading skills and secure their mathematical understanding. As a result, pupils are not mastering basic skills quickly enough.
- Support staff are not always deployed effectively to improve pupils' learning.
- Until relatively recently, governors had failed to fulfil their statutory duties. However, they are now resolute in their determination to reverse the decline in the school's effectiveness.
- Teachers are not secure in their subject knowledge or in their understanding of the age groups with which they work. Teachers are not checking pupils' learning systematically and effectively. Consequently, teachers do not have an accurate view of how well pupils are achieving.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher has given the school 'a new lease of life'. She has gained the support and confidence of staff, parents and governors.
- Safeguarding is effective.
- Recent changes in early years have had a positive impact on children's progress. The indoor and outdoor spaces are a hive of activity. Children, particularly in Nursery, are making better rates of progress in most aspects of learning.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that all groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able, make at least good progress by ensuring that teachers:
 - expect much more of pupils
 - assess pupils' work and learning accurately and set work which increases pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - plan lessons which engage and challenge pupils, particularly the most able
 - plan work which pupils find interesting and purposeful so that they develop positive attitudes to learning
 - make sure that pupils make better progress in spelling, grammar and punctuation
 - provide opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve problems, think for themselves and write at length
 - make better use of reading lessons so that pupils quickly acquire fluency and accuracy and are able to talk confidently about the books they have read
 - make sure that pupils know how to improve their work
 - meet the requirements set out in the Teachers' Standards
 - have a secure understanding of the age group they are working with and have the relevant subject knowledge, including a clear understanding of phonics and the teaching of early mathematics and writing
 - deploy support staff effectively during lessons
 - closely scrutinise the impact of the interventions employed to help pupils catch up to ensure that they are making a positive difference, particularly to pupils with low starting points.
- Improve the leadership, management and governance of the school by:
 - regularly checking on the progress that the different groups of pupils make and taking swift action if any group is not achieving as well as it should
 - making sure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used more wisely so that it improves outcomes for these pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils
 - making sure the additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively and improves outcomes for these pupils
 - providing training and support for governors to enable the governing body to improve the effectiveness with which it fulfils its responsibilities

- keeping the school website up to date and compliant with current government requirements
- making sure that all policies are up to date and fit for purpose.

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 school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- For too long the school has rested on its laurels. Since the previous inspection, there has been a decline in standards which leaders failed to recognise and address. The recently appointed headteacher has faced an enormous challenge in overcoming the complacent culture which had permeated the school.
- Prior to the arrival of the headteacher, the school had relied on its past successes and failed to move with the times. Teachers had been isolated and left to their own devices. As a result, there is a lack of understanding about what should be taught, what good teaching and learning are and how weaknesses can be corrected.
- Over time, teachers' assessments of pupils' learning have been inaccurate. Consequently, the information held by the school was unreliable. Crucially, at the end of the last academic year, at the end of the early years foundation stage and key stage 1, teachers struggled to produce evidence to support the judgements they had made about pupils' attainment.
- The school does not currently have an assessment system to provide an overview of the attainment and progress of pupils in key stage 1. However, the introduction of an online assessment and tracking system in early years has begun to provide teachers and leaders with up-to-date information about children's attainment and progress.
- The headteacher has resolutely faced the challenges presented to her since taking up post. She quickly identified the issues, alerting the governing body, the local authority and the Archdiocese of Liverpool so that urgent remedial action could be taken. The headteacher prioritised making sure that safeguarding was effective and putting together a credible improvement plan.
- Since she has joined the school, the headteacher, supported by the governing body, has taken decisive and effective action to address weaknesses in safeguarding, early years, pupils' conduct around school and the teaching of phonics. The notable improvements in all these aspects of the school's work provide evidence of leaders' capacity to further improve the school.
- The new curriculum makes sure that teachers now know what they should be teaching. The headteacher has insisted on daily mathematics, reading and writing lessons so that all pupils spend enough time securing basic skills.
- The headteacher has put in place a comprehensive training programme to bring all staff up to date in their practice. Staff spoke very positively to the inspector about the visits they have made to outstanding schools, as well as training courses and local cluster meetings they have attended. As a result, most teachers have embraced the changes the headteacher has brought in and appreciate 'the new lease of life' she has given St Teresa's.
- The headteacher has implemented a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation. This has highlighted that, while some staff have the capacity and capability to improve their practice, this is not the case for everyone. Despite the support given to all staff, some teachers and teaching assistants are not doing their jobs well enough. The more rigorous performance-management system, which has been put in place this year for teachers, leaves no-one in any doubt about what is expected of them.
- The funding for disadvantaged pupils was used to appoint an additional teaching

assistant. This is hampering the efforts of the new headteacher to tailor the provision to the particular needs of the current group of disadvantaged pupils, who did not all require additional adult support. In the past, this group has not performed as well as pupils nationally, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils. This trend has not been reversed.

- The additional primary physical education (PE) and sports funding is being used to fund specialist coaches to improve the range and quality of PE provided, as well as to extend the skills of teachers. The headteacher has recently appointed a play leader to encourage pupils to be more active at lunchtimes. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the lunchtime activities, as well as the range of after-school clubs including football, gymnastics and dance. However, although leaders have reviewed the rates of participation in physical activity, they have not yet looked at whether pupils' skills have improved.
- Pupils have opportunities to learn about and respect people of other faiths and cultures as well as their own. Recently, pupils were thrilled to attend the baptism of a teacher's baby in the school hall. The pupils study British institutions such as the role of the royal family. Pupils who were elected to the school council are very proud to have been chosen by their peers. Key stage 1 pupils developed a good understanding of the democratic process by listening to candidates' manifestos, casting their vote and hearing the results.
- The new curriculum is helping teachers to make better use of the wealth of local cultural and historical resources. For example, a trip by train to the Atkinson Centre hooked pupils into their science learning.
- Pupils look forward to the reading challenge run by the local library. Pupils help those less fortunate than themselves, for example, through their 'best dressed teddy' competition for Children in Need, as well as making contributions to the local food bank.

Governance of the school

- The governing body recognises that, prior to the appointment of the headteacher, it did not meet its statutory duties and the requirement to ensure the best possible education for all the children in the school. Governors acknowledge that, in the past, they accepted the reports given to them at face value and did not sufficiently challenge leaders about pupils' outcomes.
- The governing body is resolute in its determination to reverse the decline in the school's performance. It has confidence in the headteacher appointed and is determined to provide her with the appropriate support and challenge.
- The newly elected chair of governors has quickly set about ensuring that the governing body has the balance of skills, experience and expertise to work alongside the headteacher to improve the school's performance. Recent appointments to the governing body attest to that commitment.
- The governors have made sure that they improve their effectiveness by attending training and seeking help as required. However, the governors recognise that it is early days and they still have much to learn.
- Already governors have ensured that they have access to the information they need, reorganised the committee structure to make it fit for purpose and asked probing

questions of the headteacher so that they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher swiftly addressed the inadequacies in safeguarding practice when she joined the school. She has established a culture of vigilance, which involves staff, parents, pupils and the community.
- The headteacher has made sure that all staff are up to date in their training and understand their responsibilities. The regular school newsletters remind parents of the part they have to play. For example, the most recent newsletter reminded parents of the procedures at the beginning and end of the school day to make sure children are handed over safely. Pupils know that they must tell an adult if anything is worrying them.
- The headteacher makes sure that all concerns are followed up assiduously. She has put in place robust reporting and recording systems, so that nothing is left to chance.
- The headteacher has made sure that the school site is safe and secure. She has tightened procedures for visitors in school, installed secure fencing to the car park and carried out fire evacuation practices.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Too much of the teaching is weak. For too long, teachers have been isolated and left to their own devices. Despite recent training and support, teachers are still not teaching lessons which engage and challenge pupils.
- Teachers have not ensured that they have an accurate understanding of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Weak assessment practice, coupled with a lack of understanding about the standards pupils are expected to achieve by the time they leave the school, is hampering pupils' progress.
- Teachers' expectations are too low. Work in books is often poorly presented. Too much time is spent recapping prior learning or on tasks which have limited educational value. As a result, most pupils are not doing as well as they should or working at the standards expected for their age.
- When pupils have made mistakes, or have not grasped new learning, teachers are too slow to pick this up. There are too many missed opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to correct errors as they occur. For example, in phonics lessons, adults do not consistently correct pupils when they sound out letters incorrectly. Often pupils complete corrections too long after lessons have been taught and are not given the support they need to understand where they have gone wrong. This hinders pupils' progress further.
- The teaching of reading is weak. In specific reading sessions, the reading books are not challenging enough and too many activities take place which do not relate to reading. The most able readers are not challenged enough to discuss different reading books, to think about different authors or to select books in which they are interested.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is weak. As a result, lessons often fail to capture pupils'

interest and challenge pupils' thinking. Moreover, lack of subject knowledge limits teachers' ability to ask pupils probing questions and teachers do not adapt lessons sufficiently quickly. Consequently, behaviour in lessons is sometimes poor because some pupils become restless and distracted.

- Too much time is wasted for pupils. Teachers do not plan lessons which match the learning to the different needs of the pupils. There is a lack of urgency in helping the pupils lagging behind to catch up quickly and to accelerate the learning of all pupils, particularly the most able.
- Teaching for the most able disadvantaged group is ineffective. All pupils have to sit through and listen to the teachers' explanations despite the fact they already understand the concept and are keen to get on with their work. They are not challenged enough to attain the highest standards or to improve on the content of their work.
- Teaching assistants are not used to best effect in classrooms. Teachers do not use these additional adults as well as they could to make sure that all pupils can access learning. Moreover, on occasion, teaching assistants hamper pupils' progress by providing too much support.
- Teachers have introduced a new approach to homework. Pupils are given a question linked to their class's current topic. Year 2 pupils have clearly enjoyed researching facts about their local area. However, insufficient thought has been given to how this learning is shared with their classmates and their achievements celebrated.
- Parents who spoke to the inspector felt they were well informed about their child's progress. Some parents mentioned their intention to attend the workshop the school is holding shortly on how to help their child with mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Too many pupils lack confidence in their own skills and abilities. Limited opportunities for pupils to tackle tricky problems and edit and improve their own work hinder the development of their resilience and perseverance as learners. Moreover, lack of specific feedback from teachers means that pupils do not know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
- Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school. As pupils come through the front door in the morning, there is a buzz of excitement.
- Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. They enjoyed helping to write the school's new code of conduct. Pupils know that they should not hurt each other by derogatory name-calling. Pupils talked to the inspector about how well they all get along together, regardless of faith or culture.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Parents who spoke to the inspector talked about the high levels of care given by the school to their children. Parents have confidence in staff responding quickly to any concerns parents or their children may raise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In too many lessons, where expectations are low and pupils are not interested and engaged, pupils become distracted. When pupils' attention wanders, some pupils daydream and others fidget and chatter. As a result, pupils are not only not completing their own work but also distracting other pupils around them. A small minority of pupils, in some lessons, become very giddy, indulging in silly behaviour such as throwing resources.
- On occasions when teachers ask for pupils' attention, some pupils do not pay heed to the instructions and others chatter while the teacher is talking. This not only shows a lack of respect but also wastes valuable lesson time.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school, in assemblies and at breaktimes is much improved. The headteacher involved pupils and staff in the development of a new code of conduct. Pupils understand what is expected of them and enjoy the recognition they receive for good behaviour.
- At lunchtime, pupils are calm and orderly in the hall. Outside, they play well with their friends, taking turns and sharing the toys. Lunchtime supervisors ensure that there is a wide range of activities for pupils to choose from. Pupils told the inspector that generally they get on well together and any fallings-out are quickly resolved.
- Punctuality has improved. The headteacher regularly reminds parents of the importance of good attendance in the school newsletters. The school robustly follows up on pupil absence. Although no pupils have been persistently absent over the past academic year, absence overall was higher than in the previous year. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is exemplary.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a decline in standards.
- For the past three years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check has been well below the national average. In 2015, only a third of pupils met the standard. The headteacher took decisive action in the spring of 2016 and, as a result, the proportion of pupils meeting the standard by the end of Year 1 nearly doubled.
- Too few of those pupils whose phonics knowledge is rechecked at the end of Year 2 reach the expected standard. Consequently, only three quarters of pupils have met the expected standard by the time they leave the school.
- In the past, pupils have achieved in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. In 2016, less than half of pupils met the expected standard in reading, a fifth in writing and a third in mathematics. When the progress of these pupils was compared with pupils nationally with similar starting points at the end of early years, it was well below the national averages in all subjects.
- No pupil exceeded the expected standard in any subject in 2016 at the end of key stage 1, even those who had achieved highly at the end of Reception.
- Work in current pupils' books and discussions with the headteacher indicate this trend

is unlikely to reverse this year. This is compounded by insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their writing in English lessons and across the curriculum. In mathematics, pupils do not spend enough time reasoning, solving problems and becoming fluent in the fundamental principles. In reading, teachers do not ensure that all the activities planned in guided reading lessons are focused on developing pupils' reading skills. As a result, pupils do not develop proficiency quickly enough.

- Pupils' use of English grammar, punctuation and spelling is an ongoing problem, as is handwriting. The lack of systematic teaching of these skills limits pupils' potential to improve. Spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes are often not corrected, nor are pupils sufficiently encouraged to make more ambitious language choices to increase the sophistication of their writing. Pupils struggle to correctly join letters in their writing as they are unsure how and when to use the diagonal and horizontal strokes.
- Current weaknesses in teaching mean that all groups of pupils, including girls, boys, disadvantaged, most-able and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not achieve in line with their groups and all pupils nationally.
- Although there is an array of interventions for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, there is no analysis of the impact of these small group and individual sessions on these pupils' learning. The headteacher has identified this issue and has already taken steps to evaluate the impact of current support programmes.
- The previously fragmented and disjointed curriculum meant that pupils did not achieve well in other subjects. In 2016, Year 2 pupils had not covered enough work in science to meet the expected standard. The new curriculum provides a more coherent framework for teachers. However, weaknesses in teaching mean that pupils' progress in these subjects is patchy.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children joining early years have knowledge and skills broadly typical for their age. Although in past years children have made insufficient progress and too few have reached a good level of development, the recent improvements to this provision are making a positive difference. As a result, pupils, particularly those in the Nursery class, are making steady progress from their different starting points towards the early learning goals.
- The introduction of a daily phonics lesson in Reception has helped pupils to develop their early reading skills. However, the organisation of the lessons does not accelerate the learning of the most able pupils or help children falling behind to catch up quickly. The pace of learning for all pupils is too leisurely, so that children do not move on to new learning quickly enough. This often slows children's progress.
- Teachers and other adults, when modelling to the children, for example showing how to form a letter, do not consider the point of view of the children. As a result, children watch adults writing upside down or cannot see adults' mouths as they show how to form the sounds that letters make.
- The appointment of a teacher in charge of the early years has given the impetus for staff in both classes to work together. Adults now work collaboratively and are becoming more secure in their understanding of their roles. A number of the team,

including the teacher in charge, are new to early years. However, the training and support they have received has helped them to develop their skills and expertise.

- The improvements to the learning environment capture the children's interest and imagination. The early years is a hive of activity. Children work and play well together, taking turns and sharing the resources amicably.
- Children are purposeful, curious and tenacious. During the inspection, two boys were building a tower from stones. Several times the tower collapsed, but together they persevered until they worked out the best arrangement of stones to make the tower stable.
- Children were keen to talk about what they were doing, both with their peers and with adults. Those pupils who join the early years who are new to English or in the early stages of learning English quickly develop their proficiency.
- Parents who spoke to the inspector have been pleased with how well their children have settled in since joining the school. Parents commend the levels of care given to their children by early years staff. The regular 'stay and play' sessions provide an opportunity for parents to find out about what their children are doing in school. The school meets the statutory welfare requirements for early years.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 104917 |
| Local authority | Sefton |
| Inspection number | 10012471 |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 137 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Laura McCormick |
| Headteacher | Eleanor Daniels |
| Telephone number | 01704 567 528 |
| Website | www.st-teresas-school.co.uk/ |
| Email address | head.stteresas@schools.sefton.gov.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 2 July 2013 |

Information about this school

- This infant and nursery school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The deputy headteacher was not in school during the inspection.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2015.
- The chair of governors took up post in July 2016.
- The school does not meet many of the requirements on the publication of information on its website, including curriculum, special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupil premium spend.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector, together with the headteacher, observed teaching and learning in classes throughout the school.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other members of staff, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, the national leader of education supporting the school and a representative of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- The inspector examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, performance management, the school's summary self-evaluation, the current school improvement plan and minutes of the governing body's meetings.
- The inspector spoke with pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime and lunchtime. She also met formally with the school council to talk about their learning, behaviour and safety.
- The inspector heard a number of pupils read.
- The inspector took note of displays around the school.
- A range of pupils' books were checked jointly with the headteacher during visits to classes.
- The inspector spoke with a number of parents at the end of the school day.
- The inspector spoke with a group of staff.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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