

St Catherine's Catholic Voluntary Academy (Hallam)

Firhill Crescent, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S4 7BX

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership of the school. She is passionate and uncompromising in her determination to provide the best education for all pupils. Parents praise the way the school has transformed their children's lives and helped them flourish.
- The senior leaders, including governors, share the headteacher's vision and high expectations. Together, they have been resolute in overcoming potential barriers to learning and have broadened pupils' horizons and life chances. This is truly an inclusive school.
- Pupils make exceptional progress from their starting points. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are consistently strong and often well above national averages.
- All groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and the most able, make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Children get off to a great start when they begin in the early years because of the outstanding leadership and provision. Staff form excellent relationships with parents and children happily settle into school routines.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Coupled with an inspiring curriculum, pupils want to learn and do their best because of authentic and worthwhile learning experiences.
- Pupils are happy, motivated and excited to come to school. They demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. They are curious, resilient and engaged in their learning.
- Safeguarding is highly effective and pupils and parents have faith that their children are safe and well protected in a nurturing and inclusive environment.
- The school is outward-looking and determined to improve the education of pupils across the wider community.
- Leaders recognise the need to improve their evaluation of how additional funding is being spent in the early years.
- On occasions, pupils do not present their written work as neatly as they could.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders and managers effectively evaluate the impact additional funding is having on disadvantaged children in early years and use this to inform how future funding is spent.
- Make sure that teachers ensure pupils consistently present their work to a high standard and tackle those instances when younger pupils form incorrect letters when writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher provides truly exceptional leadership. She is completely focused on ensuring that staff and pupils achieve the highest possible standards. Due to her passion, determination and dedication, the school has become a beacon of excellence within the community. Parents spoke repeatedly about how staff have gone the 'extra mile' to support pupils and have successfully transformed the life chances of their children.
- The headteacher, alongside her excellent senior leaders, has created a warm, caring, happy and ambitious climate for learning within the school. Staff morale is extremely high. Staff are highly motivated and feel well supported to try new ideas to further improve pupils' progress. Newly and recently qualified teachers, many of whom have been home-grown through the school's own initial teacher training programme, are full of praise for the quality of support and training they receive. This group of teachers rightly describe the school as an 'incredible' and 'amazing' place to work.
- Senior leaders ably support the headteacher. They too are resolute in making sure all pupils achieve the very highest standards regardless of their backgrounds. Leaders and managers know their school inside out. Due to regular visits into classrooms, talking to pupils and reviewing pupils' progress, leaders know what is working well and why. Leaders have identified the right priorities to further improve the school. They sensibly tackle these priorities in manageable bite-sized chunks and thoroughly review the impact they are having on a termly basis. As a result, the school goes from strength to strength.
- Subject leadership is further enhancing the school's leadership capacity. Subject leaders provide timely and effective support for teachers in improving their teaching. Subject leaders have a clear sense of how they want to further develop and improve their subjects. They are highly effective in supporting teachers by using samples of pupils' work to demonstrate to all teachers the high expectations they have of staff and pupils.
- The management of staff performance is highly effective, comprehensive and well aligned to salary progression. The 'no excuse' culture ensures that performance management targets are clear, precise and ensure that pupils make excellent progress. Teachers, including those who are newly or recently qualified, benefit from the superb range of professional development opportunities available to them both in school and beyond. Consequently, the quality of teaching over time has continued to improve and leads to outstanding pupil progress.
- The curriculum is truly inspiring, exciting and thoroughly engaging. It captures pupils' interests and opens up for them a world of possibilities. Senior leaders have carefully designed a curriculum which skilfully develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of different subjects including history, geography, science, art and computing. The curriculum motivates pupils because they have a real purpose and focus for learning. Genuine and authentic outcomes at the end of each topic drive and sustain pupils' motivation. For example, Year 6 pupils created and

curated a Maya civilisation exhibition in school and invited parents to come and explore the range of work they had produced. In Year 3, pupils have recently written, published and sold a book on Roman Britain in a local bookstore. As a result, pupils are making excellent progress across a wide range of subjects. Pupils are also effectively building their levels of resilience and determination to succeed.

- Senior leaders ensure effective use is made of additional funding. Pupil premium funding is used extremely well and, as a result, disadvantaged pupils are making excellent progress across the school. There are few, if any, differences between disadvantaged pupils' achievement and that of other pupils. Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also extremely well used and leads to excellent progress in relation to their starting points. Leaders accept that further work is needed to make sure that early years pupil premium funding is effectively evaluated.
- The use of the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding has a significant impact on improving pupils' health and participation in sports. This funding is developing pupils' swimming skills, provides all pupils with two hours of sports per week and is enabling two sports curriculum specialists to effectively support teachers in further improving their teaching of PE.
- The school is outward-looking. The headteacher and her senior leaders are morally driven to provide the best possible outcomes, not only for the pupils of St Catherine's but also for pupils in other schools. The headteacher's work in other local primary schools has been effective in supporting other school leaders in the locality.
- The school has received 'light-touch' external support. However, helpful external reviews have provided school leaders with objective and accurate judgements on the progress the school is making. This helped school leaders gauge the progress they are making and informed their future plans for improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governors are excellent strategic partners. Governors make strategic decisions with care and a great deal of thought, discussion and consideration.
- Governors are focused on making sure all pupils achieve well and governors work hard to support the staff to remove potential barriers so that pupils can grow, develop and broaden their horizons.
- Governors have a clear and accurate understanding of how well the school is doing. They are perceptive, questioning and strike the right balance between being supportive and appropriately challenging.
- Governors have established simple yet highly effective ways of working with senior leaders in school to ensure that any questions governors wish to ask are answered in a timely and effective manner. As a result, valuable time is saved and ensures key decisions are made in good time.
- Governors do not rest on their laurels and are keen to develop further. Following a skills audit, governors are planning additional training to support their understanding of assessment information and their role in financial management.

- Governors have a detailed grasp of how additional funding is being spent and the impact that this is having on pupils.
- Governors ensure that all statutory responsibilities are being met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong and tangible culture of vigilance when it comes to keeping pupils safe. Staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and fully understand the key messages from the Department for Education's 'Keeping children safe in education' guidance. Pupils not only are safe but feel safe as well. Parents have real confidence that staff will keep their children safe.
- The single central record is up to date and well maintained. Thorough checks are made on newly appointed staff, including volunteers, before they can start working in the school.
- The designated safeguarding leader provides timely and effective updates for staff throughout the year. As a result, all staff in school, including kitchen and reception staff, know to whom they should report any worries or potential concerns they may have. Staff have valued recent training on spotting potential signs of radicalisation and extremism and are clear about the role they play in reporting any potential concerns. Newly appointed staff are very well inducted into the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Leaders ensure that accident logs are kept up to date and use them to identify potential risks. For example, improvements have been made to the outdoor climbing frames after a number of pupils slipped on them in wet weather.
- Throughout the year leaders make effective use of assemblies to help pupils stay safe. For example, key stage 1 pupils learned a great deal about the dangers of online messaging and how to keep themselves safe when on the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that teaching captures the interests of pupils and fires their imagination and creativity. Pupils are highly motivated, absorbed in their learning and make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Teachers and other adults are highly effective in getting pupils to think for themselves. Pupils are expected to discuss and reflect on what makes a high quality piece of work. They then successfully use these findings to check the quality of their own work. Helpful and supportive feedback from both other pupils and their teacher encourages pupils to improve and redraft their first efforts and leads to extremely high quality work over time.
- Teachers' questioning is a real strength across the school. Teachers pose searching questions to check whether pupils understand whether their answers are correct. This is particularly effective in developing pupils' mathematical reasoning skills extremely well. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and skilfully model and demonstrate

features of high-quality work. Pupils enjoy the additional responsibility of supporting other pupils and this helps promote a purposeful learning environment in which pupils excel.

- Teachers meet the needs of the most able particularly well. One most able pupil spoke for many when he said 'there's always another challenge.' Teachers skilfully build the challenges for the most able so that they are expected to develop their reasoning, questioning, explanation and research skills in greater depth across the curriculum.
- Teachers and additional adults meet the needs of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities very well. Teachers ensure that this group of pupils follow similar topics and enquiries as the rest of their classmates but with suitable and effective adaptation when necessary. Due to this inclusive approach, these pupils are thriving in this supportive and highly effective environment.
- Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. Work is well presented in the vast majority of exercise books. However, there are some very occasional lapses when teachers do not tackle younger pupils' incorrect letter formation or when some work is not presented well.
- Pupils who did not achieve the Year 1 phonics screening check make strong progress in Year 2. They are developing their understanding of phonics and are improving their levels of fluency, comprehension and enjoyment of reading for pleasure. The most able readers read with great fluency, expression and enjoy reading both at home and at school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The school environment is vibrant, stimulating and pupils feel proud to attend St Catherine's. Around every classroom, corridor and corner of the school, there are excellent examples of pupils' creativity and learning. These include impressive art installations, poetry, pupil created exhibitions and thoughtful displays on Black History.
- Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities and take them very seriously. For example, younger pupils can be 'recycling monitors' and this is effectively developing their appreciation of the need to protect the environment. During lessons, pupils become 'Ask Me' helpers when they have mastered an aspect of their learning and ably help and support other pupils with their learning.
- Pupils have excellent opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Inter-faith weeks play a significant role in helping pupils understand different faiths. Visits to different places of worship alongside various faith leaders coming to school have developed pupils' understanding and respect for different faiths. Pupils' social and moral development is excellent. There are numerous occasions for them to cooperate and work together. The curriculum also provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop their appreciation of other cultures, including Black History Month, fund raising for Red Nose Day, Third World water projects and Book Aid. As a result, pupils have an excellent understanding of British values including the

importance of being tolerant, respectful and listening to different people's views.

- There are a wide range of trips and visits that enhance and enrich pupils' learning. Professional artists and writers visit the school to support pupils in their learning and creativity. Breakfast club serves as a highly effective way of starting the day for those pupils who attend and gets them ready to learn. There are a wide range of clubs, including baking, gardening, dance, computing and a range of sports clubs that pupils enjoy attending.
- Leaders have successfully developed a range of strategies that are helping to significantly reduce levels of persistent absence and improve overall attendance. Leaders have worked closely with parents to explain the importance of regular attendance at school and the negative impact that poor attendance can have on their child's progress. Alongside a range of rewards, certificates, trips and prizes, staff have introduced the 'walking bus' and have collected pupils from their homes to ensure that their attendance at school improved and is in line with the national average.
- Links with external agencies are excellent. The designated safeguarding leader is doggedly determined to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils and their families are supported well. Leaders have developed effective plans to support these pupils and these are regularly reviewed to make sure that the most vulnerable children are safe and achieving well in school. Inspectors sampled a range of case files and could see the significant impact this work was having in improving the attendance and outcomes for those pupils.
- Reports home to parents clearly explain how well their children are achieving. Reports focus on the progress pupils are making in reading, writing, mathematics and the wider curriculum. They provide clear next steps for improvement and the role parents can play in supporting their children at home.
- Weekly parent forum meetings are highly effective in helping parents share their views about how well the school is doing. Parents feel listened to and this is helping to build parental confidence in helping their children learn at home.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They concentrate when the teacher is speaking, co-operate well with each other and are rightly proud of their achievements and their school.
- Behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are polite and courteous. They are friendly and keen to welcome visitors to their school. They open doors for visitors, and are happy.
- The school's behaviour policy and systems for rewarding pupils are in place and implemented consistently by all staff. School records confirm that behaviour is excellent over time.
- Pupils respect their school. Staff, including lunchtime supervisors, confirm that pupils are well behaved and respect their environment. At playtimes, pupils can be seen happily and sensibly playing together and chatting with each other and those staff on

duty. It is a harmonious school environment.

- Pupils have a detailed and secure understanding of the various forms of bullying. Pupils, staff and parents are adamant that on those very rare occasions when bullying happens, staff deal with it quickly and effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Over time, all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able, make outstanding progress across the school from their starting points and across a wide range of subjects. As a result, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- In the Year 1 phonics screening check, pupils consistently achieve above national averages. This represents outstanding progress given their starting points. This is because of the excellent transition arrangements from Reception into Year 1 and strong, systematic and consistently high-quality teaching of phonics.
- In 2016, by the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected attainment for their age was well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who reached standards of a greater depth were also well above national averages. Given the low starting points of many pupils, this represents outstanding progress.
- In 2016, pupils' progress by the end of Year 6 was significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who reached standards of a greater depth in mathematics were above the national average and reading and writing was broadly in line with the national averages.
- At both key stages 1 and 2, disadvantaged pupils make outstanding progress, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. Differences between them and how other pupils have progressed continue to diminish. There is little, if any, difference in how well disadvantaged pupils progress compared to the progress of other pupils nationally.
- Current in-school information, coupled with inspection evidence, shows strong and sustained progress. In all year groups, the vast majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are also making strong progress based on their starting points. This is due to the highly effective work of the special educational needs coordinator and other staff. Highly effective support, including nurture groups and one-to-one support, ensures that this group of pupils continue to make excellent progress.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from ethnic minorities make excellent progress. In all year groups, these groups of pupils are making strong progress, particularly in writing.
- The most able pupils achieve well. Pupils' work in books shows that teachers challenge pupils extremely well. For example, in the wider curriculum, this group of pupils are encouraged to deepen their understanding of topics. This includes teachers providing

regular opportunities for the most able to reflect, question, hypothesise and demonstrate a more detailed grasp of the topic they are studying.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children start in the early years with skills that are typically below those expected for their age. As a result of strong and committed leadership, children make outstanding progress. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased significantly year on year and is now in line with national averages. This represents rapid and sustained progress and means that the majority of children are ready for the demands of Year 1.
- The leader of early years has successfully created a cohesive team in which all staff are valued and share a common purpose to ensure that children make rapid progress regardless of their backgrounds or starting points. Adults have a detailed understanding of each child and quickly identify gaps in children's learning. By working effectively with parents and other agencies including local nurseries and speech and language support, children make rapid progress.
- The teaching of phonics is a real strength. Teachers and other adults target these sessions to specific groups of children to ensure their specific needs are met. Children benefit from the range of teaching approaches which is helping them rapidly improve their reading, writing and use of phonics.
- The learning environment is rich and supports children's learning well. There are a wide range of learning opportunities based on children's interests and a strong focus on developing key basic skills in English and mathematics. For example, mark-making areas are very well organised and labelled resources promote high-quality writing. Elsewhere, the 'reading corner' was a cosy and welcoming forest area with a wide range of age-appropriate books, labels and signs supporting children's early reading.
- Children who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress due to the high-quality teaching and additional support. Classrooms include audio recordings, symbols and signs to help children access the full classroom. As a result, there have been marked signs of progress for this group of children.
- Leaders have established highly effective relationships with parents. Parents say they feel there is a real and genuine partnership between themselves and school. Parents are encouraged to 'stay and play' each morning and see how their child's day begins as well as be involved in their learning. This leads to a very smooth, calm and enjoyable transition for children as they start their day at school.
- Additional funding is used to increase staffing allowing children to school for longer days. However, leaders accept that further evaluation of how additional funding is being used to support disadvantaged children is needed.
- Safeguarding checks are effective and detailed and contribute to children feeling happy and safe.

School details

Unique reference number	140588
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10023847

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	Academy converter and voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	473
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Grant
Headteacher	Fiona Rigby
Telephone number	0114 303 0381
Website	www.stcatherines.academy
Email address	enquiries@stcatherines.academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Catherine’s Catholic Voluntary Aided Academy is a larger than average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils with an education and health care plan is also above the national average.
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards that set minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school became an academy in February 2014 and is part of the Our Lady Umbrella Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, many of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons, listened to pupils read and sampled a wide range of pupils' written work.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, including the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff in charge of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors met with a group of newly and recently qualified teachers. They also met with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in formal interviews, during lessons and informally at lunch and breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered a large range of documentation related to the school's work, gaining the school's view of its performance and information concerning pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.
- Inspectors scrutinised records concerning safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors analysed 42 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire. Inspectors met with groups of parents and took into account 29 written responses from staff.

Inspection team

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Tim Scargill	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Ashworth	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Langley	Ofsted Inspector

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