

St John's Catholic Primary School

Melbourne Street, Tiverton, Devon EX16 5LB

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Governors have not been sufficiently challenging of school leaders in the past. Consequently, a decline in standards continued until recently.
- Pupils' attainment in key stage 1 fell in 2016. Pupils' punctuation skills are not well developed and so not enough of them reach the expected standard in writing by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils make too little progress in science; the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in Year 6 is low.
- Disadvantaged pupils were not supported effectively last year and so did not make rapid enough progress. However, support for current pupils is improving their achievement.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement because middle leaders have not been effective in securing consistently good practice in each key stage.
- Teaching does not consistently challenge the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, to reach a greater depth in their understanding.
- Senior leaders' planning for school improvement is at an early stage and has not yet had a significant impact on pupils' achievement.
- Senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning have not been used well in the past to set targets for teachers to improve.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher is ambitious for the pupils. She has a clear understanding of the weaknesses that need to be tackled and has identified the right priorities for improvement.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective and, consequently, pupils' progress in this subject was above average in key stage 2 in 2016.
- Pupils' behaviour is good; they are self-assured and outgoing. As a result, pupils are confident when speaking to adults.
- Leaders and governors have created a safe and well-ordered environment in which pupils feel secure. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing and communicating school improvement plans widely so that all staff are clear about senior leaders' expectations and the actions that are required
 - setting in place more regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning and use the outcomes to help teachers to improve the quality of their work
 - establishing clear roles for teachers with middle leadership responsibility and supporting them to carry out these roles effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers help pupils to develop sentence structure in their writing in all subjects and insist on accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - providing pupils with high-quality science teaching which inspires and motivates them
 - rigorously checking that the support given to disadvantaged pupils is effective in helping them make strong progress in all years
 - ensuring that teachers plan activities which closely match the needs of pupils, particularly the most able.

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

- Leaders were slow to react to a decline in standards in 2016. Although the decline has been halted, leaders have not yet done enough to secure consistently strong teaching across the school. As a result of the remaining weaknesses in teaching, some pupils, especially in key stage 1, are not making the progress they should.
- The new headteacher has accomplished much in a short space of time. She has high aspirations for the school and its pupils, and understands what needs to be done to reach them. Through her determination, she is raising teachers' expectations of themselves and their pupils. However, many of the changes she has made are very recent and it is too early to see the impact on pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders form an effective team. They are committed to the headteacher's vision for the school. However, turbulence in staffing over the last year has caused inconsistencies in teaching. Leaders acknowledge that further work is required to improve the quality of teaching to become good.
- Senior leaders have introduced a robust system for checking the progress and attainment of pupils in each year group. They gather assessment information regularly and are now using it to accurately pinpoint the actions that need to be taken to raise pupils' achievement. Improvement plans are now focused on the right priorities, but these plans are not yet implemented fully throughout the school.
- In the past, leaders have not maintained a sharp enough focus on the impact of pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils' achievement. Therefore, the differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally did not diminish. Leaders have addressed this. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is now more rapid, albeit not consistent in all classes.
- Many middle leaders are new to their roles and some middle leadership roles are being covered by senior leaders. Consequently, middle leaders have not yet been able to tackle the underperformance in teaching and pupils' outcomes in their areas of responsibility.
- Senior leaders have not monitored teachers' effectiveness rigorously in the past and so teachers have not had challenging targets for improvement. More robust systems are being established to check on the quality of teaching and manage teachers' performance. Senior leaders have identified training opportunities for individuals and for the whole staff. Recent training for all teachers in grammar, for example, has led to an improvement in the teaching of this aspect of pupils' writing.
- Leaders have secured specialist advice from a national leader of education (NLE) and a specialist leader of education (SLE). Although only recently established, this work is proving effective in supporting middle and senior leaders to evaluate and prioritise school improvement actions. Newly qualified teachers are also benefiting from this enhanced external support and are improving their skills.
- The curriculum is well planned, broad and balanced. Leaders have ensured that it is closely related to pupils' interests and, as a result, pupils are generally engaged in their learning. However, leaders have not been as successful in providing inspiring science

activities. Topic work is planned thoughtfully and provides interesting themes that are enhanced by school visits. For example, a study of William Morris animal designs in art incorporated a visit to a local National Trust property to appreciate different design work. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities including artistic, sporting and cultural events such as a production of 'The Wind in the Willows'.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well by opportunities that are threaded through the curriculum and firmly based on the school's Christian foundations. Pupils have a good understanding of other religions and cultures. Pupils are actively involved in helping other people, for example raising money for charities such as the overseas aid agency 'Mary's Meals' during Lent. By providing these experiences and others, the school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain, and promotes British values successfully.
- The additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used appropriately to ensure that pupils receive the individual help they need. The work of the recently appointed special educational needs coordinator and her colleagues is beginning to have an impact on outcomes for these pupils.
- The primary sport premium is used well to increase pupils' participation in school sport. Teachers' expertise is developed by working with specialist coaches in, for example, swimming. Pupils appreciate the extra opportunities this gives them.
- Leaders keep parents fully informed through a variety of communications. Parents appreciate initiatives such as the parent focus group; they feel included and involved. The great majority of parents would recommend this school to others.
- In recent months the school has benefited from the trust's support, including advice for the new headteacher and other leaders, and the provision of specialist support from external consultants. This has increased the pace of improvement at the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors are knowledgeable and committed to the school. However, in the last academic year neither the governing body nor the multi-academy trust kept a sufficiently close watch on the performance of the school. Consequently, they were slow to react to a decline in standards. In recent months, governors have demonstrated greater rigour in their roles. They acted swiftly to appoint an interim headteacher in February 2017 and, subsequently, have provided her with effective support and challenge. Governors now have an accurate view of the school and have worked with the new headteacher to draw up a credible strategy for improvement.
- Governors are now monitoring the school's use of pupil premium funding more effectively. However, they recognise that the impact of this funding on the progress of disadvantaged pupils is still variable across different year groups. Governors work closely with school leaders to ensure that funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well. They have also made sure that the primary sport premium is used well to promote and give access to a range of sporting activities in school.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties and ensure that the school meets the requirements for safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are experienced and effective in dealing with safeguarding issues. They have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff are suitably trained and receive regular updates from leaders so that they remain up to date.
- Leaders keep detailed records of any concerns and referrals are made when appropriate. The school works successfully with a range of different outside agencies to ensure that children are kept safe and secure at all times.
- The culture of safeguarding and child protection runs throughout the school. Staff ensure there is good communication with pupils and families. Any personal concerns that pupils may have are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because there are too many inconsistencies between year groups. For example, over time, teaching in key stage 1 is less effective than teaching in key stage 2 or the early years. Teaching between subject areas is also too variable. For example, teaching of science is less effective than the teaching of mathematics and, consequently, pupils' progress in mathematics far outstrips their progress in science.
- Teachers do not consistently give the most able pupils work which requires them to think at a sophisticated level. Teachers sometimes do not pay enough regard to prior assessment information to plan learning activities. As a result, the most able pupils cover ground which they have already understood and are not stretched to make faster progress.
- Over time, the teaching of writing has not been effective. Leaders have recognised this and have made improvements this year. For example, an initiative to improve pupils' handwriting has been successful. However, pupils' knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar still has many gaps. Pupils' ability to structure sentences also remains underdeveloped.
- Where teaching is at its strongest, teachers use questioning skilfully to pose interesting problems and allow pupils time to wrestle with ideas. For example, Year 6 pupils were asked to consider the origin and meaning of the beatitudes. Pupils developed a deeper understanding as a consequence of being allowed to struggle initially. However, where the teaching is not as effective, questioning is superficial and pupils are less motivated to strive for answers.
- Mathematics teaching is ensuring that pupils make strong progress in key stage 2. Teachers cover the curriculum in depth. Pupils are regularly asked to explain their thinking when solving mathematical problems; because of this, their reasoning skills are developed securely.
- Disadvantaged pupils receive effective extra help in Years 5 and 6 and so make good progress. Teachers are not as effective in supporting these pupils in other years and so progress varies. Better use of pupil premium funding this year is improving disadvantaged pupils' progress; however, differences in outcomes still remain between

this group and other pupils.

- Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' work. They ensure that these assessments are accurate by moderating their judgements against those of other teachers in this and other schools.
- Teachers set homework which is appropriate to pupils' ages and this is used well to reinforce and extend pupils' learning in school.
- Teaching assistants are used to good effect in the school. Pupils who most need support receive a high degree of personal attention. This allows them to access the teaching, develop their learning and make progress. Teaching assistants receive good training and support and so extend pupils' knowledge and skills well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils' self-assurance is evident when they speak to adults; they are confident and clearly proud of their school.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities they are given to make a positive contribution to school life. For example, pupils from the school council are involved in setting up a 'buddy bench' on the playground where pupils can go if they are feeling lonely.
- Staff care well for pupils and, as a result, relationships are characterised by trust and respect. Pupils know that staff will help them to sort out problems and this contributes to pupils' confidence and their feeling of security in all year groups.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example when accessing the internet. They are clearly briefed about safety, through assemblies and lessons. Consequently, they know who to go to if they are worried or concerned. Pupils understand the different forms bullying can take and they say staff will deal with it quickly on the rare occasions it happens.
- Staff offer pupils many opportunities for wider learning. Pupils' involvement in the long-distance walk the 'Exmoor Challenge', for example, makes a good contribution to their physical and emotional well-being.
- Pupils generally work diligently in lessons, but occasionally they lack the initiative to overcome difficulties for themselves and this can slow their progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are well mannered and helpful to one another. Inspectors saw many examples of their courteous behaviour.
- Pupils, from the early years upwards, are motivated and eager to show visitors around their school. A new online reward system has made a contribution to this enthusiasm. Pupils also enjoy celebrating good behaviour together with parents in assemblies.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. Leaders have established good systems for moving around the buildings. Pupils understand and respect these rules

and, consequently, the school is a calm and orderly place.

- School leaders record incidents of poor behaviour accurately and deal with them appropriately. Rates of exclusion, which were above average in the past, have fallen considerably and are now low.
- Pupils attend school regularly and overall attendance is above average. The school has good systems to check on unexplained absences swiftly, and subsequently provide support and encouragement to improve individual pupils' attendance where necessary.
- Parents and carers are positive about the school and feel that there are no significant problems with poor behaviour. They recognise that pupils are well cared for and kept safe from harm.
- Teaching assistants are good at resolving differences of opinion and calming potential conflict. Pupils generally play and cooperate together even though the playground is a relatively small space.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 fell last year and was significantly below the national average. Pupils do not build on the good start they make in the early years and, consequently, they are not well prepared for the transition to key stage 2.
- Pupils' writing skills in particular are underdeveloped in key stage 1 and they do not make the progress they should. This is because activities are often either too simple and do not build on what pupils already know, or are too difficult so that pupils do not understand what to do.
- Disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils in key stage 1 in 2016 and so the proportion attaining the expected standard in reading, writing or mathematics was low compared to other pupils nationally. In key stage 2, their progress was much stronger and, consequently, they achieved better results than other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Disadvantaged pupils are receiving better support this year and so their progress is improving in key stage 1. However, significant differences in attainment still exist, especially in writing.
- Pupils' attainment in key stage 2 science in 2016 was below average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who reached the expected standard was particularly low.
- The most able pupils' progress is in line with the national average in key stage 2. In key stage 1 the great majority of the most able pupils meet the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. However, because they are not challenged sufficiently a smaller proportion than seen nationally go on to achieve at a greater depth.
- Children's achievement in the early years is strong. Even though many children start in the pre-school, 'Little Acorns', with abilities which are below a typical level for their age, they make strong progress and finish their time in 'Big Acorns' well placed to begin Year 1. The great majority of children reach a good level of development because early priority is given to developing reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress from their starting points that is close to the national average for all pupils. A new special

educational needs coordinator is ensuring that pupils' individual needs are identified early and provision is made for them quickly. As a result, the weaker progress made by some pupils is being addressed.

- Pupils read with confidence. Inspectors heard a number of pupils read with good expression and clarity. Pupils who are less confident are still willing to sound out unfamiliar words and this resilience allows them to make sense of the text.
- Pupils in key stage 2 made good progress in reading and mathematics in 2016 but weaker progress in writing. Pupils' progress in mathematics was well above the national average. Pupils are making better progress in writing this year because of improvements in the quality of teaching. Current pupils' work in mathematics shows they understand key mathematical concepts clearly and can apply them adeptly in different situations.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join the school with varying levels of skills and knowledge; many have starting points that are lower than is typical for their age. Strong provision is leading children to make good progress. By the end of their time in Reception class they are well prepared to enter Year 1. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development is consistently at or above the national average.
- Staff make accurate assessments of children's skills when they start at the school. They provide children with a rich variety of opportunities which promote their personal development and early literacy and numeracy skills. Staff teach phonics effectively. As a result of this and other activities, children's achievement in reading at the end of the Reception Year has improved steadily in the recent past and was above average in 2016.
- The early years pupil premium is used increasingly effectively to support children with their basic skills. Although in the past disadvantaged children have not made the same progress as other children, this is changing. Assessment information shows that disadvantaged children are currently making better progress and catching up with their peers.
- Staff support children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities successfully by determining their individual requirements quickly and providing experiences which are appropriate for them.
- Children are settled and feel secure. Their behaviour is good; they listen attentively to staff and express their ideas readily. Children are proud of their school and their work. They are eager to show visitors around and demonstrate confidence when they do.
- The learning environment throughout the pre-school area, the Reception classroom and the outdoor area is safe and stimulates pupils' curiosity and interest. Staff set up different themed zones and consequently children are encouraged to explore and play purposefully. Children of different ages share the space well. They mix and cooperate willingly in play, and so develop their speaking and listening skills quickly.
- Leadership of the early years is effective. Leaders have developed a strong team spirit among staff and so morale is high. Staff have a thorough knowledge of this phase of education and are highly skilled. Because leaders have provided training which links to

the key stage 1 curriculum, pupils are prepared successfully for Year 1.

- Leaders have created a nurturing atmosphere in which children feel safe and happy. Children are familiar with routines and use resources and equipment safely both inside and outdoors. Staff are vigilant about safeguarding and make regular checks to ensure the environment provides a safe space for children to learn and explore in.
- Staff work closely with parents and communicate with them well. This ensures that children have a smooth transition into school. Parents are very supportive of the early years provision and contribute to their child's assessments. When inspectors spoke to parents, many expressed their high degree of confidence in the staff.

School details

Unique reference number	140762
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10024969

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
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	190
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Sandy Anderson
Interim headteacher	Caroline James
Telephone number	01884 253630
Website	http://www.stjohnstiverton.co.uk
Email address	admin@tiverton-st-johns-primary.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St John's Catholic Primary School is slightly smaller than the average primary school and is part of the Plymouth Catholic and Anglican Schools Trust. The trust was formed in April 2014. The work of the trust is overseen by a board of directors. The Trust is responsible for one nursery, one first school, 32 primary schools and two secondary schools across seven local authorities in the south-west region.
- When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2012, St John's Catholic Primary School was judged to be a good school.
- A significant number of changes in staffing have taken place in the last six months including two changes of headteacher. An interim headteacher was appointed in February 2017 for a period of three years.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is being supported by a national leader of education and a specialist leader of education through the Exeter Consortium and Teaching School Alliance.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including minutes of governors' meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour logs, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and three other governors, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and age groups, and scrutinised a wide range of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to a number of pupils read and met with pupils from the school council.
- Informal discussions took place with several parents. Inspectors also took account of 33 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, 31 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Roy Souter	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Morris	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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