

St Sebastian's RC Primary School

Douglas Green, Salford, Greater Manchester M6 6ET

Inspection dates

28–29 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across year groups is patchy.
- Some of the work set for pupils, particularly the most able, is too easy for them. In some activities, the standard of pupils' work is low. The achievement of current pupils is variable.
- Teaching in the early years is inconsistent. Staff plan some activities poorly, which holds back children's progress and causes them to be restless in their learning. Some leaders' support, and the direction they give for the work of staff, is not helpful enough.
- The school's website does not meet requirements.
- Senior leaders do not manage all changes in the school successfully.
- On occasion, lapses in clear communication among senior leaders, staff and governors get in the way of people working well together.
- Middle leaders' reviews of the teaching of geography do not make sure that all pupils' learning is demanding and wide-ranging.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils in key stage 2 are learning to write well.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is improving noticeably. Pupils benefit from a strong focus on solving real-life problems.
- Pupils are confident, enthusiastic learners who understand the diverse world of modern Britain. They respect the views of other people and communities. They say that they feel safe at school.
- Leaders make sure that high-quality displays in classrooms and corridors in key stage 1 and 2 celebrate pupils' learning.
- Governors ask challenging and considered questions of leaders about the work of the school. Governors hold a clear understanding of what more the school should do to improve.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they enjoy positive relationships with caring staff.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning further improves pupils' outcomes by:
 - improving staff's assessments of pupils' learning so that teaching matches closely the needs of pupils, including the most able
 - making sure that the skills of teaching assistants are developed and used fully in activities
 - making sure that teachers take full responsibility for the work of all pupils in their class
 - expecting high standards of presentation in pupils' work.
- Improve the quality of education for children in the early years by:
 - re-establishing a clear role for a knowledgeable, skilled leader to drive forward improvements in Nursery and Reception and contribute to whole-school improvement
 - making sure that all teaching is strong and that learning is meaningful and challenging enough for children
 - giving the early years equal status to other parts of the school.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - strengthening the work of leaders, staff and governors so that they work together better and share fully in the drive to improve the school
 - developing the role of the assistant headteacher to enhance the leadership of the school
 - making sure that communication among all of those in the school is open and positive and involves sufficient opportunities for debate and discussion
 - making sure that leaders plan changes well and allow enough time for initiatives to show impact before making further refinements
 - checking the quality of teaching more thoroughly so that leaders spot and address weaknesses quickly
 - identifying more precisely how staff should refine their teaching and how improvement will be assured, including through targets set for staff
 - improving the quality and consistency of checks by leaders so that teaching, including in geography, matches the school's planned coverage of the national curriculum
 - making sure that the school website meets requirements and is easy for parents to use.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders do not manage all changes in the school well. At times, variable quality of communication among senior leaders, staff and governors holds the school back from making the best use of everyone's efforts to develop St Sebastian's. This slows the pace of improvement.
- Senior leaders underuse the role of the assistant headteacher to improve the school, except for coordinating key stage 2, and English. This means that the capacity of leaders is not fully utilised.
- The quality of teaching is improving and leaders know what successful teaching looks like. However, some targets set for staff are not specific enough to ensure that improvement happens rapidly. Some staff lack confidence in their senior leaders to give them the extra help and support they need to refine their work.
- The work of middle leaders in geography is at an early stage of development. Not enough checks are in place to make sure that teaching matches the school's plans for coverage of the national curriculum. In contrast, the work of the school in mathematics and English is led well.
- The learning of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefits from the adequate spending of extra funding. Leaders review and amend some specific activities carefully and in detail. However, leaders do not have a precise understanding of the overall impact of the school's work to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school website is difficult for parents to use and does not include all the required information.
- Leaders make sure that relationships among different groups of pupils in the school are harmonious. The school successfully includes pupils who are new to the UK or to Salford in the life of the school. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are included positively in class activities.
- The school uses additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils well, for example to bring in additional workers to the school to support pupils' emotional health and well-being. The progress of some disadvantaged pupils is rising well.
- Leaders use physical education and sports premium funding carefully to extend pupils' skills. For example, pupils benefit from extra coaching from a local high school. Links to a local sports partnership enable pupils to attend popular dance activities. Some funding pays for sports kit for disadvantaged pupils, to remove barriers to their participation.
- Leaders make sure that the curriculum is interesting and taught in increasingly creative ways. There is a strong focus on celebrating the work of a local artist LS Lowry, as well as learning about Shakespeare's plays. Leaders check that staff give pupils good opportunities to visit the many local museums as part of their learning.
- Pupils say their attendance at breakfast club enhances their development and progress. They say that they learn much at the lunchtime art club and computer club. Older

pupils are benefiting from attending regular booster classes, for example in mathematics.

- Leaders give much attention to enhancing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. As a result, the curriculum prepares pupils successfully for life in the diverse world of Salford and of modern Britain.
- The school's Catholic ethos is evident throughout the work of the school. Leaders, staff and governors are deeply committed to making sure that pupils understand their faith and religious heritage. They learn to respect the faiths of other people.

Governance of the school

- In recent years, the governing body has unavoidably lost three chairs. The new chair and most governors have been in role for only a short period. They are firmly committed to supporting the school. They engage well with outside help to assist them in their work. As a result, they ask perceptive and challenging questions of senior leaders about improvement.
- Governors keep a close eye on school finances and on safeguarding.
- Governors have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. Nevertheless, they are seeking reports from senior leaders that are written even more clearly, because they want to understand the work of the school as fully as possible.
- Governors are beginning to visit the school with an agreed focus much more regularly. They are keen to fulfil their duty to test out what the headteacher tells them about the school.
- Governors are working to address the patchy communication among leaders, staff and governors that sometimes affects the unity of approach. They are determined to see this matter resolved as the school moves forward.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All pupils whom inspectors asked said that they feel safe at school. They enjoy learning to keep themselves safe, for example about how they should use social media and the internet.
- Staff give much attention to making sure that the school premises are secure. Staff check the identity of visitors thoroughly.
- Staff are patient, caring and listen well to pupils' views.
- Leaders, staff and governors undertake regular training about safeguarding. Up-to-date policies guide their work clearly. Leaders share new government guidance about safeguarding fully with staff and governors.
- Checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are thorough. Leaders record and review information fully and regularly.
- Leaders are well informed about key local risks to families and use this knowledge to keep a close check on information about pupils and parents.

- Staff record concerns about pupils' well-being carefully and securely. Leaders pass information promptly to other agencies where necessary.
- During the inspection, evidence emerged that in contravention of the school's agreed e-safety policy, some staff use mobile phones in classrooms and corridors. Inspectors raised concerns with the headteacher, who drew up a clear plan to rectify the issue immediately. Given the range of effective arrangements in place to keep pupils safe, this issue does not indicate wider weaknesses in safeguarding pupils at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. For example, in Year 1, teachers are not planning activities skilfully enough to meet pupils' needs. In some activities, pupils do not learn much. In different year groups, geography is not always taught well.
- Some staff do not give enough attention to challenging and deepening the learning of the most able pupils.
- Current teaching in Year 1 is not good enough to make sure that pupils catch up in their phonics skills. For example, during the inspection, some staff incorrectly taught pupils the sounds that letters make.
- Some teaching assistants are deployed thoughtfully in activities and their skills make a big difference to the quality of pupils' learning. Where successful, these staff show good subject knowledge and learn much from working closely with their teacher colleagues. However, some teaching assistants feel that leaders do not support them well in their work. In some year groups, teachers do not get to know the needs of all pupils in detail. This is because teaching assistants are given too much responsibility for pupils' learning. As a result, pupils' progress slows.
- Over the past year, the quality of teaching in Year 2 is too variable. Valuable opportunities for pupils' learning have been lost. While current teaching in Year 2, for example of mathematics, is now improving quickly, pupils are still behind in their learning.
- Teachers follow the school's policy on giving feedback to pupils about the quality of their work. Pupils say the comments are helpful. However, on occasion, teaching staff set a poor example when writing on the board and in feedback for pupils in their books.
- Staff's assessment of pupils' skills at the end of blocks of teaching and their reviews of pupils' progress are developing well. Nevertheless, leaders acknowledge that staff need to make better use of assessment in lessons to refine teaching.
- Current teaching in Year 4 is weak and pupils are not benefiting enough from activities. In contrast, teaching over time in other key stage 2 classes is stronger. For example, in Year 5 mathematics, the teacher skilfully helped pupils to compare fractions and identify and explain which fraction is larger. Where pupils struggled, the teacher responded quickly with additional explanation and careful questioning.
- Teachers use homework successfully to promote better reading, writing and mathematics.

- In some classes, teachers make good use of links in subjects such as religious education, history and art to teach issues of equality and diversity so that pupils develop an informed knowledge about the world.
- The teaching of mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 is improving steadily. Staff skills and confidence are growing through regular training and team discussions. Pupils enjoy mathematics due to staff's frequent use of open-ended investigations and opportunities to solve problems. Staff use assessment of pupils' mathematical knowledge well, to spot gaps in learning and to adapt teaching.
- Staff celebrate pupils' learning positively in well-considered displays in key stages 1 and 2. Staff present books and reading areas in particularly attractive and enticing ways, for example in Year 6. Pupils' learning to read in a group with an adult is taught well in some classes.
- The teaching of writing in key stage 2 is a strength of the school. Successful examples of pupils' writing abound in wall displays and in pupils' English and topic books. Pupils enjoy writing and know how to share their ideas with different audiences. Leaders' careful review of why spelling, punctuation and grammar were weaker in 2016 and their actions to help staff are beginning to improve the quality of teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils know about different faiths, including Islam, Judaism and Christianity.
- Across classes, pupils work well in groups and independently. They are proud to be pupils at St Sebastian's. Year 6 pupils are aware of how important extra study is to their skills in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Pupils with whom the inspectors spoke said their feelings and views matter to staff. They feel staff listen to and respect them. They say that staff respond well to the rare instances of bullying and that there is no racism among pupils. Pupils say that they feel safe at school.
- Pupils have a well-informed understanding of their democratic right to disagree peacefully with other people, including governments. They are aware of the main issues arising from the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union. They understand that the people of the United States are debating many important issues following the recent presidential election.
- Through school events, assemblies and class discussions, pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, they understand how to stay safe online and when using social media.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They show good self-discipline. Pupils are not disruptive in classes – even when teaching is not engaging. Where pupils need extra help to manage their own feelings or behaviour, staff give skilful extra support.

- Leaders and staff make sure that classrooms are attractive places to study and pupils treat classrooms and their workbooks with respect.
- When walking around the school or meeting visitors such as school inspectors, pupils conduct themselves proudly and confidently. Older pupils show care and consideration towards younger pupils.
- In classrooms, the dining hall and outdoors, pupils demonstrate positive and caring attitudes. They listen and respond well to staff during lessons because they are keen to learn. Disruptions in activities are infrequent, low-level and do not limit pupils' learning.
- Levels of pupils' absence and persistent absence from school are worse than found nationally. However, pupils' attendance is improving well this year due to numerous strategies set in place by leaders. There is a successful focus on recognising and rewarding pupils who attend school as much as they should.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- At times, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are not demonstrating deep thinking or a comprehensive ability to apply their skills in different subjects.
- Some current pupils are not learning successfully because of weaker teaching. The standard of presentation in some pupils' work is worsening over time.
- Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are not making good progress in geography because of variability in the quality of teaching.
- The abilities of Year 1 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to read unfamiliar words in the phonics screening check is lower than the national average in 2014 and in 2016. School information shows that not enough current Year 1 pupils are becoming skilled readers.
- In key stage 1 in 2016, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, attained well in mathematics and reading but poorly in writing.
- Pupil premium funding is having a positive impact on some disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress, for example, in key stage 2 in 2016, boosting their achievement in reading to be similar to that of other pupils.
- Across the school, there are examples of pupils who have special educational needs and/or a disability making good progress over time in their learning. However, because of the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in some classes, some pupils are not currently making the progress they should.
- In Year 6 in 2016, the progress of pupils was only average in mathematics and reading. Nevertheless, pupils' overall attainment in these subjects was above average. Some low-ability readers attained well, as did some middle-ability pupils in mathematics. The reading, writing and mathematics skills of current Year 6 pupils are improving steadily.
- Key stage 2 pupils, including less-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils, are skilled and confident writers. Pupils' spelling and grammar skills are improving well this year.
- In science, pupils in key stages 1 and 2 attained above the national average in 2016.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Staff do not plan some teaching in the early years well. For example, a mathematics activity in Reception for children to count objects indoors did not hold their attention or help their learning much. Children were then given sugary sweets to count and eat – contrary to the school’s desire to promote children’s good oral health.
- Staff sometimes expect too little of children, for example when adults over-direct children’s design, construction and painting of model Easter chicks. As a result, children are not expressing their ideas well in creative activities.
- The proportion of children in the school who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception is below the national average. Thus, some children move to Year 1 not ready for continuing their learning. Teaching across the early years is not established well enough to be sure that assessments of children are accurate and reliable. Nevertheless, children in Nursery and Reception are confident, enthusiastic learners.
- In both Nursery and Reception, children do not always behave well. They lose interest when staff’s teaching is unengaging and become unsettled. At other times, some staff do not expect enough of children to sit up properly at story or snack times.
- Over time, several changes of staffing in the early years have held back improvement. Some classroom spaces for learning have not been organised well by staff. However, in recent weeks, there has been a rapid improvement in the quality of Nursery provision due to the skilful work of some staff. Leaders are starting to make sure that regular advice and assistance is given to early years staff, for example by the local authority.
- Staff organise and develop the outdoor area thoughtfully to give children many valuable opportunities to learn. Children in the Nursery and Reception benefit from learning together outdoors, for example in their problem-solving and role play. At these times, some staff play with and alongside children skilfully. For example, a teaching assistant questioned and challenged a group of boys with patience and precision, to help them count and compare groups of stones.
- Where children’s learning is most successful, staff encourage them to observe and investigate and, for example, to use fiction and non-fiction books to gain further insight. In Nursery, children were fascinated not only by the eggs awaiting hatching in the incubator, but by the many books selected and presented carefully by staff about chickens and Easter.

School details

Unique reference number	105963
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10024199

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Boldrini
Headteacher	Rita Bourke
Telephone number	0161 921 1625
Website	www.stsebastiansprimary.co.uk
Email address	stsebastians.rcprimaryschool@salford.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the government's pupil premium funding is above average.
- The majority of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at standard times is

above average.

- The school offers a breakfast club every morning.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the curriculum, pupil premium strategy, the governing body and pupil performance data on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in classrooms across the school. The lead inspector made several joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and reviewed a random sample of pupils' work since September 2016.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in classes and around the school. Inspectors spoke with 12 pupils chosen at random from Years 3 to 6 and asked about their learning, pupils' behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to consider their reviews of the school and plans for improvement.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff including the assistant headteacher and reviewed 25 responses from staff to an Ofsted questionnaire.
- The inspectors talked with some parents as they brought their children to school. The lead inspector spoke with one parent by telephone. There were too few parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to analyse.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair. Inspectors considered minutes of recent governing body meetings and checked evidence of reports made by the headteacher to governors.
- Inspectors considered information from reviews of the school by the local authority. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The inspectors checked school records and policies relating to the care and protection of pupils.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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