

# Our Lady and St Philomena's Catholic Primary School

Sparrow Hall Road, Liverpool, Merseyside L9 6BU

## Inspection dates

4–5 July 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Inadequate</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- This school has improved considerably and is now good. The executive headteacher and head of school have high expectations. Their tenacious leadership has delivered a sea change in the quality of education provided for pupils.
- Leaders, including subject leaders, work very well together and are committed to providing high-quality education. A small number of subject leaders, new to their roles, have limited skills in leading improvement.
- Children in early years overcome their barriers to learning and make good progress from their starting points. Children are well prepared for Year 1. A small proportion of children do not attain a good level of development.
- The quality of teaching and assessment is consistently good, including in the early years. Teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge, which they use to promote learning well. Occasionally teachers do not make sure that pupils correct spelling errors.
- Governors have not ensured that information published on the school's website about the curriculum contains enough detail.
- Leaders' actions have brought about much-needed changes to the quality of the environment in which pupils learn. Pupils are very proud of their school and the opportunities it offers them. Attendance has improved considerably. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has dropped like a stone and is lower than the national average. However, a small number of pupils do not attend as often as they should.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. Pupils' self-esteem, confidence and aspirations are promoted strongly through a wide range of opportunities, by caring staff who, according to their pupils, 'put children first!'
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, now make good progress in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. The proportion of pupils attaining expected standards has improved strongly and is now above national average. However, the proportion of pupils attaining standards at greater depth, particularly in key stage 1 and across the school in writing, is lower.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that a higher proportion of pupils attain the standards at greater depth, particularly in writing, by:
  - refining the quality of feedback about pupils' writing so that it reflects the high quality and finely focused guidance received by pupils in upper key stage 2
  - reducing spelling mistakes in pupils' work.
- Ensure that a higher proportion of children in early years attain a good level of development.
- Increase the attendance of the few pupils who are persistently absent from school without good reason.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that subject leaders gain the knowledge and skills they need to contribute to the school's improvement
  - refining governors' checks on the quality of the information that they publish on the school's website, particularly relating to the school's curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Three years ago, the school was judged to be inadequate. It is now a place of learning of which the community can be rightly proud. Leaders have high expectations of themselves and all staff. No stone has been left unturned in the drive for high-quality education. The tenacious commitment of the headteacher and her senior leadership team has brought about considerable improvement in the quality of teaching. Leaders place the welfare and achievement of pupils at the heart of all their actions.
- Leaders have a clear, insightful and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They work closely as a team with staff and governors and have developed an aspirational vision for improvement. Their determination and effective use of performance management and carefully considered appointments have led to considerable improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders' planning for school improvement is clear and highly effective. It includes priorities based on detailed evaluation of the school.
- The leadership of subjects in the school is good, particularly in English, mathematics, science, and of special educational needs. Subject leaders carefully monitor and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in their subject. Subject leaders keep up to date and informed about developments in their subjects and use this to inform their planning. A small number of subject leaders are new to their roles and have more limited experience, knowledge and skill in knowing how to lead a subject. Senior leaders are aware of these needs and have well-established and effective training and development plans in place.
- Leaders demonstrate a deep understanding of the barriers to learning faced by pupils. Leaders' appropriate use of the pupil premium funding ensures that disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, achieve well. Actions include a focus on building pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy to allow them to confidently access learning in other areas of the curriculum. Music lessons, educational visits and technology resources paid for by pupil premium funding further enrich disadvantaged pupils' education.
- Leaders' good use of the additional primary school sports funding has resulted in improvements in pupils' participation in sports and in their adoption of healthier lifestyles. Leaders use the additional funding effectively to provide a rich diet of sporting opportunities, including Bollywood dance sessions, archery and gymnastics. The establishment of a wide range of sports clubs, including funky fitness, fencing gymnastics, and the running of a specialist soccer school have increased participation and attainment.
- Leaders place pupils' welfare and well-being at the heart of all they do. Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is carefully and strongly nurtured in this caring school. As a result, pupils said that they feel valued. This is particularly evident in the way that pupils respect and care for each other and for adults. For example, older pupils act effectively as 'bully busters' to promote harmony in the playground. All pupils are treated with understanding and respect. Leaders promote equality strongly and effectively.

- Senior leaders recognise the importance of attendance in helping pupils to succeed. There are highly effective systems to track and respond quickly to any absence, including the use of a highly effective learning mentor to support families in getting their children to school on time. The meticulous analysis of attendance allows leaders to identify those at risk and head off many absences. This, coupled with a focus on rewarding good attendance, means that the vast majority of pupils attend regularly.
- The school's curriculum is broad, balanced and carefully designed to meet the needs of pupils. It ensures that pupils systematically develop their knowledge and skills in subjects and promotes fundamental British values and pupils' personal development and resilience strongly. The curriculum equips pupils well for their next stages of education.
- Leaders make good use of the additional funding they receive for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The leader with responsibility for special educational needs (SENCo) ensures that support is carefully planned, well organised and effective in ensuring that pupils make good progress. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress.
- Parents are well informed about life in school and their children's progress, through regular newsletters, individual termly reports and information events. They overwhelmingly support the school and recognise the vast improvements that have been brought about by leaders since the last inspection.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governance of the school is effective. Governors have upped their game since the last inspection. Many governors possess professional skills and use them well to hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions. They have improved their skills in checking on the school's progress and measuring the success of leaders' actions through appropriate support from the local authority and archdiocese. Governors share leaders' vision and commitment. They know their school well because of the quality of the information that they receive from senior leaders. Their regular and purposeful visits to the school allow them to check the accuracy of the information they receive. Consequently, they understand how teachers are going about raising standards.
- Governors have secure understanding of the school's policy for managing performance, including its link to teachers' pay, and they ensure that it is robustly applied.
- Governors have not ensured that the content of the school's website meets the requirements relating to the curriculum.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are followed meticulously. Statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children, including those members of staff who are shared with their partner school.
- Leaders have taken appropriate actions to ensure that the school is a safe and secure place in which children can learn. Carefully controlled access and appropriate fencing

ensures that pupils remain safe and secure during their time in school.

- Appropriate training ensures that staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding and that they are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face. Records are fit for purpose and meticulously kept. Leaders share information with parents and appropriate authorities effectively to ensure pupils' safety.
- Governors have ensured that appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Very few teachers currently working in school were present at the last inspection in 2014. Carefully considered appointments and effective training have reinvigorated teaching.
- Teachers and committed, well-trained teaching assistants have good subject knowledge in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics and art. Pupils are inspired to learn through interesting and challenging activities that take them out of their comfort zones to explore new ideas. Teachers make good use of homework to extend learning further beyond the school day. Pupils relish these challenges, particularly in Year 6 where pupils fondly talk of developing their resilience as they learn from mistakes that they make while completing challenges.
- Reading and writing are taught with increasing complexity across the school. This results in pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, developing their skills in reading and writing well. Writing activities are frequently linked to other subjects, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, pupils applied their studies of classical literature to perform in a local Shakespeare festival. Teachers seize opportunities that give pupils the chance to write about real events. For example, in Year 6 pupils wrote eloquently about the struggles faced by Mary Eliza Mahoney and how she promoted women's rights in the United States of America during the Victorian era. However, the teaching of writing still needs further refinement to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils attain the standards at greater depth. On occasions, particularly in other subjects, teachers do not reinforce English spelling, punctuation and grammar. Consequently, pupils' work in their books and on display sometimes reinforces incorrect spelling.
- The quality of teaching of mathematics has considerably improved. Teachers are confident in their own knowledge and skills and use them effectively to promote deep understanding of mathematical ideas, such as equivalent fractions, to all groups of pupils. They frequently assess pupils' understanding and use their findings well to inform their plans. When necessary, they quickly change their teaching to address pupils' misconceptions. Pupils have good knowledge and master their mathematical skills well. For example, in key stage 2, pupils of all abilities develop their skills in using algebraic equations to represent pattern and sequence by undertaking fun investigations well matched to their abilities.
- Teachers demonstrate the same high expectations in other subjects across the curriculum as they do in mathematics and English. Pupils' work in books is typically of a high standard across the subjects. Teachers develop pupils' knowledge systematically. For example, in key stage 1, pupils developed their scientific enquiry skills during an

enthusiastic investigation of the menagerie of mini-beasts found in the school grounds. Work in pupils' art sketchbooks illustrates how teachers systematically develop pupils' drawing skills to a high standard by the time they leave the school.

- Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and learning and have high expectations of all groups of pupils in lessons. However, on occasions their enthusiasm to celebrate pupils' completion of tasks can result in pupils receiving limited guidance about how they could further improve their work and learn at greater depth.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Personal development and welfare are a key strength of this school and the foundation from which pupils thrive and make progress.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and look after themselves because of the high-quality teaching they receive. Regular visitors from external agencies help to reinforce teachers' safety messages, including how to stay safe in their community. Pupils were keen to share their experiences in practising how they would quickly return to the safety of the school buildings to protect themselves in the event of a local emergency. They spoke confidently about keeping safe in the community and demonstrated secure understanding of how to stay safe while online.
- All pupils spoken with are fiercely proud of their school and said that they feel safe and are happy to come to school. They had difficulty in recollecting any incidents of bullying and are confident that teachers would deal with any incidents quickly and effectively. Pupils have a very good understanding of the different types of bullying, including those relating to gender or race or that found online. They play an active and effective part in the school's work to prevent bullying. There is a strong emphasis on care in the school, and pupils reflect the caring attitudes of staff in their conduct around the school and its grounds. Pupils relish roles of responsibility, such as 'bully busters', librarians or maths ambassadors, in which they can contribute to making a positive difference for others.
- Pupils demonstrate high levels of understanding of equality and diversity because they are woven into the curriculum. For example, pupils were incensed and strongly expressed their abhorrence of the actions of some people in their local community who make fun of people who have mental and physical disabilities.
- The school has excellent relationships with outside agencies. Leaders are proactive in seeking additional advice and guidance, when appropriate, to protect pupils from harm.
- Leaders recognise that many pupils' limited experiences of the wider world have limited their knowledge and skills, particularly in vocabulary and literacy. Leaders' dedicated promotion and development of extra-curricular activities, including residential visits, mean that they now abound in school. This contributes strongly to pupils' personal, social, moral and cultural education, alongside their academic achievement. For example, recent participation in a choral festival promoted pupils' self-confidence and built on work done in class. The breakfast club ensures that pupils are well prepared for a day of learning. Clubs include a wide range of different sports, computing, drama,

maths and reading clubs, choir and eco club. They develop personal interests and useful skills that ensure that pupils leave well equipped to be positive contributors to society.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct is exemplary. They are polite and courteous to adults and each other and calmly and purposely move around the school because of teachers' high expectations and well-established routines. They are attentive in lessons and eager to learn. They welcome visitors and eagerly engage in articulate conversations about their work and school life.
- There has been considerable improvement in the quality of teaching and the environment in which pupils learn. The school's highly skilled and committed learning mentor has established good relationships with families that she uses well to promote good attendance. This, coupled with the nurturing and supportive ethos of staff, means that pupils now like coming to school. Attendance has dramatically improved for all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Overall attendance is now close to the national average and improving, and the proportion of pupils who are absent persistently has dropped like a stone to be in single figures. However, there remain a small number of pupils whose parents do not ensure that they attend as often as they should.
- Leaders' use of exclusions has, over time, been higher than the national average but has reduced dramatically over the last two years. The numbers of exclusions are now very low.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Outcomes for pupils have improved considerably since the last inspection. Things are now very different. Pupils read fluently and confidently, and are able to analyse texts incisively to find the information buried within them. Pupils frequently complete interesting written tasks that are closely linked to their studies in other subjects. They are articulate and able to express their options clearly.
- The progress made by pupils in key stage 2 has accelerated considerably from the inadequate progress in 2014. Disadvantaged pupils' differences in progress and attainment with those of others nationally have diminished considerably. Work in pupils' books shows that the different groups now make good progress in their learning in all subjects.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave school is now above the national average. Most-able pupils now receive the challenge that they deserve and make good progress and work at a high standard. For example, high-ability Year 6 pupils confidently completed a challenging task, to use algebraic expressions to describe patterns identified in a series of shapes. The proportion of pupils attaining standards at greater depth is in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils

achieve less well in writing than in other subjects.

- Standards in key stage 1 have improved considerably since the last inspection. Pupils currently achieve much better because of the better quality of teaching that they receive.
- Pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics is of a high standard. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of a wide range of artistic techniques, including the appropriate use of different grades of pencil to provide different textures and shades in sketching. Year 1 pupils demonstrate an understanding of how Frank Stella promotes minimalism in his print-based artwork.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points because of the support and teaching they receive.
- Pupils read widely and often in school and as part of their homework. Consequently, they have developed a love of reading and are proud of improvements to the library. They develop good levels of fluency and are confident in their use of phonics to overcome the challenges of unfamiliar words.
- The progress made in phonics by all pupils from their low starting points is strong. Increasing proportions of pupils attain the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check. Disadvantaged pupils do not attain as well as others in the Year 1 check but catch up before they enter Year 3 because of effective additional support in Year 2.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The leadership and management of the early years are good. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses. They have a clear vision for improvement that they share effectively with the teacher and teaching assistants. Leaders' actions since the last inspection have brought about such considerable improvements to the quality of teaching and the learning environment, including welfare provision for children who attend, that they are now used by the local authority as a model of good practice.
- Children settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes because of high-quality transition arrangements with home and other providers. Early years leaders effectively use the information they gain from visits to other providers and the children's homes to inform their planning and to sow the seeds of learning by providing induction packs.
- Children are polite and courteous. They are keen to learn and play and collaborate well together. Children swiftly develop their inquisitiveness and social skills.
- Parents are actively involved in their children's learning because of the sustained efforts of the early years staff to encourage and engage with them. Parents frequently stay and work alongside their children, for example, making robots and mini-beasts. These visits provide excellent opportunities for teachers and other adults to discuss children's needs and celebrate their achievements. Well-constructed and informative termly reports keep parents up to date with their children's progress. Parents who spoke with inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the impact that the department has on their children's education.
- Children are kept safe because well-trained and vigilant staff implement the school's safeguarding policies with rigour and act quickly to deal with any concerns. Effective



partnerships with external agencies, including the local authority early years specialists, health and social care professionals, and other education providers, ensure that staff are well trained. Children receive the appropriate support they need to thrive, make good progress and behave well. Leaders ensure that all welfare regulations are met. The environment is secure and safe. Highly effective systems are in place for the safe delivery and collection of children at the start and end of the school day.

- The quality of teaching is good. Highly skilled teachers and teaching assistants frequently use questioning well to probe and develop children's understanding. They make good use of the much-improved outdoor provision to promote learning by providing exciting and challenging activities for children. Adults actively engage in play to promote learning while ensuring that they capitalise on pupils' interests and opportunities to extend knowledge. For example, a teaching assistant carefully constructed questions, which encouraged Nursery children to explore how they could alter and control the flow of water in drainpipes and help more ducks to float. Teachers use assessment well to identify and address children's needs and any misconceptions. For example, teachers recognised that children did not have the necessary basic skills to access learning in the computer suite. Consequently, they devised and implemented a series of lessons on how to use a mouse, save and print that has ensured that Reception children are confident and ready for the computing curriculum in key stage 1.
- Nearly all children begin the early years with social skills, levels of communication, literacy and language skills and understanding of number, shape and space that are below, and in many cases, considerably below, those that are typical for their age. A large proportion of children enter the Reception class from other providers, and many have no experience of schooling at all. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the time they leave the early years is rising quickly because of the good teaching that they now receive.

## School details

Unique reference number	131837
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10035643

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eileen Kelly
Head of School	Lynne Sullivan
Executive Headteacher	Anne Radford
Telephone number	01515 258552
Website	<a href="http://www.olasp.co.uk">http://www.olasp.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:philomenas-ao@ourlady-st-philomenas.liverpool.sch.uk">philomenas-ao@ourlady-st-philomenas.liverpool.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	16–17 September 2014

## Information about this school

- Our Lady and St Philomena's Primary is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The overwhelming majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- The school provides a breakfast club that is available to all pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

- There have been significant changes in staffing, including senior leadership and governance, since the last inspection. The school shares an executive headteacher with a local primary partner school.
- The school does not meet the requirements on the publication of information about the content of its curriculum on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons or parts of lessons and looked at pupils' work. They listened to pupils reading and talked with pupils about their lessons and school life.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher and the head of school and a range of subject leaders, including the senior leader responsible for special educational needs. Inspectors spoke with representatives of the governing body and the local authority and archdiocesan school-improvement advisers who work with the school. They held a meeting with the local authority's principal officer for schools.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' progress and to school management, including the arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and staff and took account of the two responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View. The inspectors took account of the responses to the staff questionnaires and the responses to the pupils' questionnaire.

## Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Amanda Stringer

Her Majesty's Inspector

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