

Our Lady and St Swithin's Catholic Primary School

Parkstile Lane, Croxteth, Liverpool, Merseyside L11 0BQ

Inspection dates

11–12 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires Improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides effective leadership. A shared drive and vision with staff ensures that pupils achieve well from their starting points. The headteacher builds on the success of previous interim leaders.
- Pupils make good progress across the school. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards is improving in English and mathematics.
- Different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress because of the effective support that they receive.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved markedly and is now good. Teachers who are less experienced receive strong support from leaders.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' achievement.
- Pupils feel safe and happy at school. They support and respect each other and are keen to do well. Pupils learn to take responsibility and help each other.
- Children get off to a good start in Nursery and Reception and are prepared well for future learning. Recent development of the outside areas supports the social and emotional development of children well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their appreciation of British values are promoted well.
- The governing body is well informed of the leaders' work. It provides a good level of support and challenge. Governors are committed and ambitious for the school to continue to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Teachers have not paid sufficient attention to improving pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling across the wider curriculum.
- Some teachers do not consistently set activities that extend pupils' knowledge and skills at greater depth.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Leaders recognise this and are taking an uncompromising stance to improve pupils' attendance further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the number of pupils working at greater depth in all subject areas by:
 - making sure that teachers set the right level of challenge to enable pupils to make progress at greater depth
 - ensuring that teachers tackle any misconceptions in learning promptly
- Improve pupils' attendance further and reduce the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school.
- Embed the strategies to improve the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling in pupils' writing across the wider curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- After a period of turbulence, there is clear, focused and determined leadership from the headteacher and her leadership team. Leaders are successfully building on improvements initiated by previous interim leaders. Staff morale is high. In a short space of time, the headteacher has built on previous improvements to reinforce the culture of high expectations and ambition. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes have improved since the last inspection and are now good.
- The headteacher and subject leaders work in close collaboration with one another. They evaluate the quality of teaching and learning together. Subject leaders have an accurate view of pupils' progress in their subject areas right across the curriculum. This strong focus on learning and progress means that pupils achieve well in the wider curriculum irrespective of their backgrounds or starting points.
- Leaders have a thorough approach to monitoring teaching, learning and assessment. In wanting 'nothing but the best' for the pupils, leaders leave no stone unturned in pursuit of strong outcomes. Leaders have built excellent relationships with other schools in order to improve training. Teachers also undertake cross-school moderation of assessments to ensure that they have an accurate picture of how well pupils are achieving.
- Leaders and staff have a clear rationale behind the broad and balanced curriculum that is 'underpinned by aims, values and purpose'. The curriculum is highly reflective of the school's Catholic ethos. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as Lego therapy, dance, music, drama and sport. These activities nurture pupils' interests and develop their skills well.
- Leaders weave pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the curriculum. Consequently, it is included in most subjects. Half-termly visits to places of interest extend pupils' knowledge of different religions and cultures.
- Leaders use the pupil premium grant for disadvantaged pupils well. Leaders identify each pupil, assess their individual needs and use funds effectively to support disadvantaged pupils so they make good progress. They also use funding to offer assistance so that pupils can access the breakfast club, educational visits and other events.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has good understanding of those pupils who require extra support. The SENCo puts appropriate support in place so that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Leaders undertake regular reviews of this support to ensure that it is effective. The SENCo uses the extra special educational needs funding efficiently.
- Primary physical education and sport funding has been used successfully to widen the range of sports on offer. Pupils now have the opportunity to compete in the wider community so Our Lady and St Swithin's is 'back on the map'. The sports coach helps pupils to develop their skills in a number of different sports. Leaders have invested heavily in improving the range of sporting equipment on offer to pupils so that opportunities are plentiful.

- The local authority and the archdiocese have provided continuous, effective support and challenge to leaders since the previous inspection. Consequently, the school's self-evaluation is accurate, teaching is strong and pupils' outcomes are now good.
- Links with parents are good. They are happy with the improved communication and supportiveness of the new headteacher and her team.

Governance of the school

- Since the last inspection, governors have worked tirelessly to ensure that their decisions have a positive impact on the pupils and staff at the school. One example of this is the successful appointment of a substantive headteacher, following a period of turbulence.
- Governors have not shirked difficult decisions. They have been proactive in creating a strong leadership team to take the school forward on its improvement journey.
- There is clear evidence of challenge and support in equal measure. Governors demonstrate a strong understanding of what they need to do to improve the school further.
- Governors ensure that their training is current and up to date and take their responsibility for safeguarding seriously.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership team ensures that all staff and governors read and act on the latest guidance on 'keeping children safe in education'. The school works successfully with its key partners to ensure that all pupils are safe and cared for well.
- The social and emotional welfare of all pupils is paramount. There is a very strong safeguarding culture, which is clearly evident through the level of care that staff demonstrate towards each and every pupil. There is mutual trust between pupils and the adults who look after them.
- Pupils of all ages understand internet safety and how to stay safe online. Leaders communicate well with parents through newsletters, the website and school activities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the whole of the school. It is now good. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is particularly strong. Weak teaching has been swiftly tackled and support has been provided for teachers with less experience. This has led to most pupils across the school making good progress from their starting points.
- Classrooms are bright, vibrant and purposeful. Teachers showcase pupils' work well. There is some very creative and imaginative artwork from pupils' wider learning opportunities.
- There has been a sea change in attitudes to learning. Pupils are now actively engaged

in their learning, particularly where the activities are purposeful and pitched at the appropriate level. School behaviour logs show that improved teaching has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour in the classroom. On the few occasions where pupils do go off task, it is because teachers need to reshape learning to meet pupils' needs better.

- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge overall. However, on occasions they do not use of appropriate terminology, particularly in science and music.
- The highly effective teaching of phonics ensures that pupils can build words well and develop their early reading skills confidently. Pupils with different abilities read fluently. They have benefited from recent investment in a comprehensive range of reading materials to suit all ages and abilities. Teachers are successfully focusing on applying phonic skills to pupils' writing, particularly in Years 1, 2 and 3.
- Teachers are effectively developing the pupils' ability to reason and solve problems in mathematics. Pupils are delighted with the additional equipment used to support their learning. They understand what they need to do next to improve.
- In the lessons observed, there were limited opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth. Examination of pupils' books and leaders' own information about the progress that current pupils are making provides further evidence that teachers need to challenge pupils further so that they excel.
- The school's curriculum appeals to pupils. For example, teachers chose different genres of texts to attract pupils' interest. An example of this was during an English lesson in Year 6, where pupils had an enthusiastic discussion around the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915, with the loss of many innocent lives. One pupil chose the headline, 'News to make your heart sink!'
- Currently, some teachers are not consolidating pupils' basic skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling in the classroom or across the wider curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are becoming confident learners, well equipped for their lessons, and settle quickly to their work.
- There is a commitment throughout the staff to support the social and emotional development of pupils so they become successful learners of the future. Pupils know how to make the right choices and they understand whom to turn to if they have a problem.
- Pupils know about the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and homophobic bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare and if they have any concerns adults deal with issues quickly. Pupils learn how to eat well and stay healthy, physically and mentally. The school council was proud to discuss its role in making the healthy changes to packed lunches and cooked meals. Their rationale was, 'If we aren't allowed chocolate bars in packed lunches, we should only have fruit for pudding with

our school dinners.’ Leaders made the changes for pupils.

- The breakfast club has grown exponentially in a short space of time. There is a wide range of activities on offer that encourage pupils to attend. Whole-school attendance figures are already showing signs of improvement as a direct result of the breakfast club.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school has a calm, orderly and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils are polite and well mannered. Pupils hold doors open for adults and each other and they show consideration for one another. All the pupils that the inspectors spoke with said that behaviour has really improved.
- In lessons, pupils listen carefully to their teachers and apply themselves well to their work. Only occasionally are pupils’ attitudes less than good, when teachers do not give them suitably challenging work that keeps them on task.
- At school lunchtimes and breaktimes adults supervise pupils well. There are lots of activities for pupils to engage in so that they develop their physical skills and an awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Behaviour on the playground has improved as a result of this.
- Leaders now track behaviour so that they are able to analyse patterns of behaviour for the small minority of pupils who require additional support.
- Attendance is lower than national expectations and persistent absenteeism remains higher than the national average. This is an area for further development, although persistent absenteeism has already started to fall due to the uncompromising stance taken by school leaders.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The headteacher and leaders have successfully addressed the underachievement of pupils since the last inspection, following a number of staff and leadership changes.
- The progress pupils make in this school in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 is similar to their peers with the same starting points nationally. Provisional progress measures for 2017 indicate that good outcomes have been maintained.
- The school’s own assessment information shows that current pupils are making the progress expected of them. Where teachers identify the pupils who are falling behind, they put timely interventions in to place. Overall, pupils progress well across year groups and across subjects.
- The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check is consistently above national figures.
- Pupils read with fluency.
- At key stage 1, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has improved. However, there was a slight dip in mathematics. Leaders have addressed this with a new calculations strategy and improved equipment in the classrooms.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics show an

improving picture. In some year groups, disadvantaged pupils often make similar or better progress than their peers. This is especially so in reading and mathematics.

- Leaders have ensured that pupils learn across a range of subjects. Their learning and personal development is supported by a range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils have the opportunity to achieve well in subjects beyond core subjects, such as music, history, art and physical education. It is not uncommon for pupils to achieve better in these subjects than in English and mathematics.
- Books and information about pupils currently in the school show that while attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is still below the national average, provisional results indicate a significant improvement in attainment in 2017.
- Too few pupils are working at greater depth. Some teachers do not provide sufficient challenge. As a result, achievement for some most-able pupils is not where it should be.
- Pupils' skills in writing are not as strong as those found in reading and mathematics. This is because of gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Leaders have identified this issue and they have clear strategies in place to rectify the situation.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of the early years is effective. Staff work collaboratively across the Nursery and Reception settings to ensure that the quality of provision is of a good standard. As a result, children, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress from their low starting points.
- There are warm and caring relationships in the early years settings. Adults have high expectations of the children, including that of behaviour. Consequently children cooperate well and learn how to share and take turns because adults consistently follow these routines. Behaviour is good.
- Leadership of the early years is good. As a local authority moderator, the early years lead has a good grasp of assessment. The tracking of children's progress is accurate and informed by a wealth of information. Evidence of the progress that children make is clear in their learning journeys, which parents can access.
- The deputy headteacher works in the Nursery and is also the special educational needs coordinator. She provides early help to support children as they start their journey through school.
- Outcomes for children are good. Gender gaps between boys' and girls' development have been addressed. This is because leaders have created activities that engage boys' interests. Boys and girls did equally well according to the school's 2017 tracking information.
- Communication with parents is good. Newsletters provide an excellent source of information and parents are encouraged to stay and play at every opportunity. There are workshops so that parents can learn how to support their children at home.
- The learning provision, both inside and outside, is developed and adapted well to suit

the children's learning needs. A dedicated play area is used for children to play freely, enhancing their social and emotional development.

- Children start their time in the early years with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for age and stage of development. Most children make good progress from their starting points. By the time they leave Reception over half the children achieve a good level of development and are ready for learning in Year 1. All children make good progress from their starting points.
- Children are presented with activities that grab and hold their attention because teaching is good. Adults are quick to encourage cooperation and conversation during adult-led activities and independent tasks. During one lesson observed, children were enthusing about the smoothies they had made apart from one, who said she was happy to make the smoothie but thought it tasted 'horrible'.
- Teachers have developed strong links with other schools. They use reflective practice to improve the early years offer constantly.

School details

Unique reference number	104632
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10042426

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	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J McCormack
Headteacher	Mrs E Hartley
Telephone number	0151 546 3868
Website	www.ourladyandstswithins.co.uk
Email address	swithin-ao@olss.liverpool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 December 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Early years provision is part time in Nursery and full time in Reception.
- There have been many changes of headteacher since the previous inspection. A substantive headteacher was appointed in March 2017.
- The school is a smaller than average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is much higher than average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2015 and 2016, which

are the minimum standards expected nationally for pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed teaching in lessons. These included joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their learning.
- Inspectors talked to parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors took account of the free-text messages sent in by parents. There were 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. There were no responses to the staff or pupil questionnaires.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the chair and members of the governing body, two representatives from the local authority, a representative from the archdiocese and school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including: the school's own information on pupils' current progress; anonymised evidence of performance management and professional development; the school development plan and school self-evaluation documents; planning of work in different subjects; leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Maggie Parker, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jonathan Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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