

St John's Church of England Primary School

Denmark Street, Waterloo, Liverpool, Merseyside L22 9RG

Inspection dates

1–2 November 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School records, current pupils' work and the performance of pupils in national assessments show that pupils make good progress. Pupils' previously high absences are reducing quickly. Pupils' attendance is good.
- Teaching over time makes a positive difference to pupils' abilities. They learn well across subjects.
- Following a period of much change, the new headteacher has brought stability and a clear sense of direction to the school. She makes sure staff learn what good education looks like. She supports staff and leaders skilfully.
- Senior and middle leaders work together successfully to improve the school. They make sure pupils' assessments are used carefully to review and improve learning.
- Pupils become skilled, confident readers because of first-rate support from teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils benefit much from reading widely and often at school. They are eager to read even more.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 learn to grapple with complex mathematical problems. The teaching of all pupils in these classes, including the most able, is skilful. However, in some other classes the most able pupils need more challenge in mathematics activities.
- Leaders and governors make sure that the decisions they make uphold the Christian values of the school. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's values.
- Leaders are developing a school where teachers are increasingly confident and creative in how they teach.
- Children in the early years gain a good start to their education. They grow quickly in their confidence and learn many new skills, for example in how to write for a range of purposes.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the Christian faith and what it can mean for their lives. They respect that other people may have different beliefs to themselves. However, they do not have a well-developed knowledge of other faiths and religions.
- Pupils understand how democracy works at school, but do not understand enough about democracy in their local area or nationally.
- Pupils behave sensibly in lessons and around the school. They care for one another and show much respect for staff. They feel safe and enjoy their learning at St John's.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Give most-able pupils greater challenge in their mathematics activities so they achieve beyond expected standards.
- Make sure pupils develop a more detailed understanding of other faiths and religions and a fuller knowledge of democracy in their local area and nationally.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Upon taking up post, the new headteacher reviewed teaching and pupils' outcomes carefully throughout the school. She identified that standards in the school were beginning to slip. Subsequently, staff improved their skills and rose to meet her expectations. Standards rose quickly as a result.
- Leaders' sharp, accurate priorities for improving the school are based on thorough reviews of pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching. Targets set by leaders for teachers are clear, measurable and link closely to school priorities.
- Leaders make sure that teachers work closely with other local schools. Staff learn from the experiences and insights of others, as well as share good practice from St John's.
- Middle leaders have a clear grasp of what the school does well in their subjects. They have an informed knowledge of outcomes and the curriculum across the school. They value the support senior leaders give them. These leaders are perceptive and accurate in their understanding of how to improve the school further.
- Leaders and staff design the school curriculum carefully. For example, they give much consideration to using the school's coastal location to maximum effect. Pupils understand the value of their local beach, sand dunes and marina. The headteacher makes sure that any revision of the school's curriculum considers examples of good practice from other schools. While pupils enjoy and benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities, some parents would like to see even more.
- Leaders' thorough and well-considered arrangements to spend the physical education and sport funding are an exemplar of good practice. Leaders make excellent use of expertise from a nearby secondary school to train staff, broaden learning for pupils and increase pupils' skills and participation in sport.
- In the past, pupil premium funding was not spent well and made too little difference to pupils' learning. Leaders' careful review and revision of the school's work in 2016 mean this money is now spent very carefully. Staff and leaders are very clear which issues they are tackling. The difference in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is diminishing quickly as a result.
- Leaders also manage special educational needs funding well. The extra support provided for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities helps them to learn successfully and make good progress.
- Leaders, staff and governors make sure pupils are prepared confidently for their lives in modern Britain. Pupils learn from a rich variety of opportunities about how to lead positive, rewarding lives as part of their community and country. Although pupils learn how democracy works by electing their peers for different groups such as the school council, they do not understand the wider implications of democracy locally and nationally.
- Leaders and staff promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils well. For example, pupils develop a strong understanding of the Christian faith. Those pupils elected to join the school's ethos club undertake extra work to promote

the school's values, for example to show their peers what it means to have courage. Pupils respect the rights of other people to have different views and beliefs. They learn how to ask thoughtful questions and how to challenge prejudice, for example through participating in a workshop about anti-Jewish propaganda with the Anne Frank Trust. Even so, pupils' understanding of other faiths and religions is not well developed.

- Given the school's improved outcomes, as well as the proven skills of leaders, the capacity for further improvement is good.

Governance of the school

- Governors keep a close eye on the work of the school. For example, they review safeguarding, pupils' outcomes and school finances carefully. Governors ask clear and considered questions of senior and middle leaders about the work of staff and pupils. They challenge and probe the accuracy of what they are told. Governors visit the school regularly and focus on specific subjects or aspects of the school's work. They make good use of these insights to support committee and full governing body meetings. They make sure newly recruited governors bring the skills needed to complement the existing expertise of the governing body. Governors make sure that important strategic decisions affecting the school take account of the school's Christian values.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- St John's is a school that is proactive about safeguarding. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 learn about the risks of sexual exploitation. Parents attend school workshops, so they too are fully informed. Staff are knowledgeable about local and national child protection issues because they receive frequent training and updates.
- Leaders maintain and review carefully school records of concerns about pupils' care and protection. Leaders share information quickly and appropriately with other agencies. Extra help is available to pupils on site. The school curriculum is planned thoughtfully to develop pupils' understanding of safeguarding. Leadership of the school's safeguarding work is shared by three, well-trained staff. This means there is always a safeguarding leader on site, from whom staff can seek advice.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- In the years following the previous inspection, the skills of some teachers at St John's did not keep pace with changes to teaching and assessment in the new national curriculum. Too little training, support and challenge meant that not all teachers adapted their work to meet the raised national expectations for what pupils should be learning. The quality of some teaching and assessment in the school began to slide and pupils' learning was negatively affected, particularly in key stage 2 in 2016. Due to the skill and determination of the new headteacher, weaknesses were tackled quickly. The quality of teaching in the school across years and subjects is once again consistently good and improving.

- Across the school, teachers often give pupils clear explanations and demonstrations. Teachers work carefully together across classes to plan and review their teaching. Teaching assistants play a skilled and valued role in the quality of support provided for different groups of pupils.
- Staff give pupils many opportunities to develop and refine their writing skills. Pupils are now writing with more confidence and skill across subjects because they are taught well.
- Pupils' learning in key stage 1 and 2 is typically calm and purposeful. Pupils enjoy opportunities to learn on their own, as well as from their peers. Teachers move pupils skilfully from one activity to another and pupils are often absorbed in lessons.
- The teaching of phonics, particularly in key stage 1, is strong because of much work by staff to improve teaching and assessment. Teachers and teaching assistants understand how pupils learn to recognise the sounds that letters make. Staff teach letter sounds correctly and inspire pupils through exciting activities, rhymes, poems and stories.
- Teachers often motivate their pupils with impressive activities. For example, in Year 6 pupils learned that birds have beaks that are matched to their different foods and environment. Pupils used precise language such as 'habitat' to explain their thinking. An activity to help them predict how different birds' beaks might gather food more quickly than others, engaged them fully; not least because of the opportunity to act as a bird with mock beaks made of straws, sticks and clothes pegs.
- The mathematics subject leader coordinates the work of staff expertly and has strong subject knowledge. Training for staff and their close links with other schools and the local authority are improving the teaching of mathematics rapidly at St John's. Staff now expect pupils to think, reason and experiment. As a result, pupils explain their mathematical ideas clearly. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to solve complex problems in different ways. Pupils say they enjoy mathematics because it teaches them to think deeply. Even so, in some classes, activities are not adapted enough to meet the needs of the most able pupils.
- Staff's assessments of pupils are frequent, detailed and used thoughtfully to plan for pupils' learning. Assessments of pupils are accurate and reliable. This is because arrangements for teachers to record pupils' learning, as well as check the accuracy of one another's work, are firmly established. Leaders review the quality of staff's assessments of pupils with skill. Staff check the quality and range of their assessments of pupils against those by teachers from other local schools.
- Staff and leaders use as many ways as possible to make sure pupils arrive at school ready for lessons.

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 how to apply themselves in lessons in order to be a successful learner. They work happily alone and in a team. In some classes pupils know how to challenge

themselves further when they grasp new learning quickly.

- Pupils are considerate towards others. They keenly raise funds to contribute to charities. They know how to act responsibly towards elderly people and how to support the local food bank.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to improve their personal development, for example those elected as sports leaders act on behalf of pupils to referee and record the score in competitive sports at the school.
- Pupils are well informed about the importance and value of healthy eating, exercise and dental health.
- Pupils have an appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including online. They know who to approach if they are concerned about their safety. They told inspectors that staff listen to them and act on what they say. Pupils requiring extra support value the help provided in the nurture room.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils say such behaviour is unacceptable and challenged quickly and successfully by staff.
- St John's has good transition links with feeder secondary schools. Clear information-sharing with teachers at the next stage helps pupils to move on with confidence.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils consistently show good conduct in classes, around the school and outdoors. They are self-disciplined. They respect other people, the school premises, resources and equipment.
- Pupils are calm when they arrive at the start of the day. They remain settled and at ease throughout lessons. The school is peaceful. Over time, disruptions to lessons are low-level, infrequent and tackled well by staff.
- Pupils understand the school's expectations for their behaviour and they respond positively. Where individual pupils need extra help managing their own feelings and behaviour, staff work successfully as a team to give skilled support. Parents are positive about pupils' behaviour at school.
- Pupils' levels of attendance at school are broadly average. Pupils who previously had high rates of absence and persistent absence now attend school much more regularly. The sharp improvement in their attendance this past year is because of much work by staff and the new headteacher. Good attendance for all pupils is celebrated frequently at St John's. Leaders review the attendance and punctuality of all pupils closely. They take many well-planned steps to support families and to make sure pupils come to school. Leaders are unafraid of challenging parents about their responsibilities.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- While pupils traditionally make good progress across subjects and classes at St John's, this was not the case for pupils in Year 6 in 2016. This was because of weaknesses in teaching. Significant and rapid improvements in teaching in 2017 meant pupils' progress and attainment rose sharply. Pupils once again leave the school with the skills

and abilities they need to start secondary school. Pupils' current work throughout key stage 2 shows clearly that this improvement is being sustained. Current pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.

- Although many pupils start at the school with poorly developed language skills, staff tackle this successfully throughout key stages 1 and 2. Pupils leave the school confident and articulate. They learn much from the careful ways in which staff speak to them, as well as the varied opportunities provided to practise their growing language skills. Pupils with whom inspectors spoke represented themselves and their school well. They demonstrated a wide vocabulary and a proud understanding of how to speak to official visitors about their learning and the world around them.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points. Staff and leaders give pupils skilled support. They understand precisely the barriers to pupils' learning and in which subjects they need the most help. Pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder thrive because of knowledgeable, sensitive teaching.
- Year 1 pupils' skills in reading familiar and unfamiliar words in the phonics screening check are above the expected standard. A concerted effort by staff at key stage 1 to improve pupils' phonics skills now means that current pupils who are now in Year 3 have well-developed reading skills.
- Pupils throughout the school are skilled, enthusiastic readers. They read widely and successfully. Pupils talk accurately about a wide range of authors. They are knowledgeable about different types of book, such as mystery or biography. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy the wide range of books in school and those that they take home. Parents are happy with the quality and frequency of pupils' reading homework.
- Pupils' skills in writing are improving rapidly. Current pupils write with skill and enthusiasm across subjects because teaching is increasingly well informed, organised and inspiring. Pupils' success is evident across subjects. For example, pupils' books in Year 2 show a wide range of thoughtful writing in history and geography.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is good. For example, they gain extra confidence in their number skills and their knowledge of different calculations.
- Leaders make sure that funding for supporting the learning of disadvantaged pupils is targeted wisely. Extra help is organised carefully and disadvantaged pupils are catching up quickly with their peers, for example in their mathematics skills in lower key stage 2.
- Pupils are achieving more and more success in science because of good teaching and the careful work of middle leaders to develop pupils' learning. For example, pupils use scientific language with increasing confidence and precision when creating experiments.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are achieving well in reading and writing throughout the school. The most able pupils, particularly in upper key stage 2, are developing a deep understanding of how to reason and solve problems in mathematics. However, in some classes the learning of the most able pupils in mathematics slows because teaching is not challenging enough.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is clear, well informed and confident. This is because of careful oversight by the headteacher and good access for the early years leader to support and advice. Staff are starting to try new ideas in their teaching because of the positive culture in the school.
- When they start at St John's, children's language, communication skills and understanding of writing and numbers are below those typical for their age. Teaching is skilful and focuses precisely on helping children to grow in skill and confidence across subjects. For example, children benefit greatly from the many opportunities to learn and practise their writing, both indoors and outdoors. They make good progress and by the time they leave they are ready to start Year 1.
- Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding. They are vigilant about making sure all children feel safe and protected. Staff listen to children. Staff know what information might suggest a child is at risk of harm and what the school should do in response.
- Information about children's starting points, as well as their achievements, is used carefully to plan and review worthwhile activities for children. Actions for developing and improving the early years at the school are well considered, achievable and realistic.
- Teamwork between staff and relationships with parents are strong. Parents say they are well informed about their children's progress.
- Children benefit from thoughtful teaching that gives them many meaningful opportunities for learning, indoors and outdoors. They become happy, confident learners.
- Children behave sensibly. They show great care for their friends and classroom. Their relationships with staff are very positive.

School details

Unique reference number	104920
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10043208

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Jean Forward
Headteacher	Cheryl McManus
Telephone number	0151 928 5685
Website	www.stjohnscephprimarywaterloo.co.uk
Email address	head.stJohnswaterloo@schools.sefton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 April 2013

Information about this school

- St John's is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is average.
- There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The headteacher is new to the school since the previous inspection.
- 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 meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school. The lead inspector conducted a series of joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors checked pupils' work to see what learning and progress have been like throughout 2017. An inspector reviewed a sample of pupils' work in English, mathematics, history and geography with the headteacher.
- An inspector heard some pupils from Year 2 and Year 4 read.
- Inspectors reviewed information about pupils' behaviour, their attendance and the progress they are making. Inspectors considered examples of: targets set for staff; information from leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning; and reviews of how well the school is doing.
- Inspectors met and spoke with pupils in classes and around the school. Inspectors reviewed a summary of responses from pupils to a school questionnaire from 2016. Inspectors spoke with a random sample of 10 pupils from key stages 1 and 2.
- Inspectors met with the school leaders for mathematics, English, science, sports and the early years. The lead inspector spoke with the school's education welfare officer who was working at the school gate on the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with the headteacher to consider their views of the school and their plans for improvement. An inspector met with the headteacher to review the school's work to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of Sefton local authority.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents as they dropped their children at school. Inspectors reviewed 13 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors reviewed 38 responses from parents to a school questionnaire completed the day before the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed the checks made by the school on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. Inspectors reviewed school records about the care and protection of pupils.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Stevens

Her Majesty's Inspector

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