

St Cecilia's Catholic Infant School

Snaefell Avenue, Tuebrook, Liverpool, Merseyside L13 7HB

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Improvement has not been rapid enough. Leaders' expectations are not sufficiently high. As a result, progress, particularly of the most able, middle-ability and disadvantaged, is variable and requires improvement.
- Assessment is not sharp enough. Leaders do not have a consistent and precise enough overview of pupils' learning to enable them to insist on appropriate challenge. Governors do not have an accurate understanding of how well pupils are achieving and as a result do not challenge leaders effectively.
- Assessment information is not always used precisely enough by teachers in the classroom to meet pupils' needs.

- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. They do not take enough opportunities to challenge pupils to apply their learning and develop the skill of working on their own.
- Teachers do not ask sufficiently probing questions to encourage pupils to reason, think more deeply about their learning and articulate their understanding.
- Not enough children are confident to use their phonics skills by the time they leave early years.

The school has the following strengths

- The committed and passionate leadership team are clear about what needs to be done and improvements that have been put in place are beginning to take effect.
- St Cecilia's radiates a strong Christian ethos and a sense of a 'loving family'. They truly live up to the quote 'love one another as I have loved you'.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported.
 This ensures that they make good progress from their starting points.

- Strong relationships and the promotion of pupils' personal, social and emotional skills are excellent, as is the rich and vibrant curriculum.
- Early years is well led. Good teaching and provision ensures that children engage in their learning and enjoy their start to school life.
- Parents think highly of the school and are confident that their children are safe and well cared for.



Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to rapidly raise the achievement of pupils, including the most able, middle-ability and disadvantaged, by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise their expectations regarding what pupils can achieve
 - provide opportunities to extend and challenge pupils
 - use assessment more precisely in lessons to match work to pupils' ability and ensure that pupils know how to improve their work so they can move on in their learning
 - offer more opportunities for pupils to apply their learning and develop their confidence to work on their own
 - are confident to ask questions of pupils to encourage them to reason and think more deeply about what they are learning and articulate their understanding.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - the pace of improvement speeds up, so that more pupils achieve what they are capable of
 - leaders and governors insist on high expectations of achievement for all pupils
 - assessment is refined further so that leaders have a consistent, accurate overview of pupils' learning
 - governors have an accurate understanding of how pupils are achieving so they can challenge more effectively.
- In early years, ensure that as many children as possible are confident to use their phonics skills so that they make as good a start as possible in Year 1.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how leadership and management can improve in this area.



Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the pace of improvement has been swift enough. As a result, too few pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders rightly recognise the importance of the highest-quality personal development and welfare for their pupils. They also have high expectations of pupils' conduct and behaviour, which pupils rise to. However, leaders have struggled until recently to have similar high expectations of pupils' achievement or recognise what they are capable of. This is because they have found it difficult to adapt to the greater expectations set by the new national curriculum. Although measures are now in place to raise expectations and the quality of learning experiences, this has been slow to start.
- Leaders are honest in their views that the school is not as strong as it once was, but still have an overgenerous view of the school. Self-evaluation does not capture the true picture of where the school is in its development or the speed needed to address issues. However, the majority of priorities identified for improvement are accurate, and where action is taken there is a positive impact on teaching, learning and pupils' progress, for example the action that was put in place to identify pupils not on track to meet their targets.
- Leaders have now put in place an agreed system for collecting assessment information on pupils. This information is used regularly by senior leaders to discuss pupils' learning with teachers. It is also used to plan opportunities to help pupils who are struggling and need to catch up. However, there is too much information available. This has resulted in some assessments not being precise enough to support leaders or teachers in pinpointing pupils' exact learning needs, or to identify where more challenge is needed. This is particularly the case for the most able and middle-ability pupils who have the potential to make further gains.
- The use of pupil premium funding requires improvement. Funding is used in a variety of ways, particularly in supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being. It is also used to support engagement with families and to ensure that this group of pupils is given equal opportunity to access all that the school has to offer. However, it is not used effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, achieve as well as they could.
- The school is led by an experienced senior leadership team and a dedicated, passionate headteacher. They have been honest and sincere about their shortcomings. Leaders are clear about what now needs to be done and are determined to rapidly improve.
- Curriculum leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility. They benefit from regular opportunities to meet with colleagues from other schools and participate in professional training. They share the learning from this to improve and develop the whole staff team. They evaluate the outcomes of their subject's action plans and regularly share these with senior leaders and governors. As a result, they make an important contribution to school improvement in their subject.
- The leadership and organisation of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective. Identification of their needs is thorough and resources are of a



- good standard. Staff have a good understanding of pupils' learning and welfare needs and every effort is made to remove any barriers to learning. This ensures that pupils make good progress. They also succeed in their personal and social development.
- The school's Christian values and school motto 'Living together, loving together and learning together' are embodied in everything that the school does. Leaders' promotion of equality and diversity has fostered pupils who are extremely caring, considerate, respectful and tolerant of each other and the wider community.
- Leaders are highly respected and have the full commitment of staff, parents and pupils. This contributes to the very positive motivation of all staff for continued improvement. Relationships between staff are very strong. Teachers are unanimous in the pride they feel working at St Cecilia's.
- The school offers a rich, broad and balanced curriculum that engages pupils and contributes to their enjoyment of learning. It covers all subjects but is particularly strong in developing personal, social, emotional, health and citizenship skills. Pupils also talk excitedly about how much they enjoy science. The curriculum is further enriched by providing real-life experiences to stimulate and excite pupils, such as school trips and visitors to the school. The school grounds are a source of great pride to pupils, who talk enthusiastically about the games they play at lunchtime, their reading hut and their go-karts. Reading, writing and mathematics are woven across the curriculum wherever possible.
- The primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding is used well. Pupils benefit from a commitment to good teaching and say how much they enjoy sport and find lessons fun. Pupils recognise the value of physical activity as a part of being healthy.
- The excellent promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means the school is a calm and very considerate environment where pupils mix happily together. Pupils are actively involved in the school community, which contributes to developing and promoting the school values. Pupils were keen to explain that as a 'school of sanctuary', 'everyone is welcome', 'we don't care who they are, we are one family'.
- Through assemblies and the curriculum, pupils learn about the wider community, respecting people from different backgrounds and with different characteristics. They raise funds for charities and learn about tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. A strength of the school is the opportunities that pupils get to discuss their rights and responsibilities. They apply these to themselves but also reflect on them when looking at current events or how people are treated around the world. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain and understand its values.
- The school is well supported by the local authority. This has been helpful to leaders in addressing priorities to improve early years and aspects of teaching and learning. Leaders' contribution to the work of the local authority is both valuable and highly respected. Leaders also work with local colleges and universities. The school plays a full part within various networks of schools. They support each other in a range of areas, for example working together to develop practice and checks with regard to assessment.

Governance of the school

■ Governors have not been as effective as they should be at ensuring that pupils achieve as well as they could.



- Governors ask good-quality, challenging questions of school leaders in all areas of school life except when challenging the progress and achievement of pupils. In part, this is because the information they are given is not always accurate, precise or detailed enough for them to gain a thorough understanding of the progress that pupils are expected to and can make. As a result, school governors have not insisted on the highest academic expectations for their pupils.
- The governing body has made sure that primary PE and sport funding is spent effectively and makes a difference for pupils. However, because disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as they could, they have not been effective in monitoring the impact of pupil premium funding.
- Governors offer a good range of expertise to the governing body. They are conscientious in their responsibilities and enjoy taking part and contributing to the life of the school.
- The governing body has a good understanding of performance management procedures and supports the headteacher effectively in ensuring the management of teachers' pay.
- The governing body is diligent in carrying out its responsibilities to safeguard pupils and, to this end, has appointed a safeguarding governor to oversee and monitor safeguarding and welfare-related matters.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in school, as is the care and welfare of vulnerable pupils and families, who benefit from good-quality additional support. There is a clear message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Effective safeguarding and child protection systems are in place and are understood by staff. Appropriate training for staff and governors is undertaken and up to date, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism and female genital mutilation.
- There is vigilance around the care and support of vulnerable pupils. The school's inclusion team have cultivated strong, supportive relationships with parents and other agencies, which are instrumental in contributing to the safeguarding of the vulnerable pupils in their care.
- Pupils spoken to were unanimous in their view that they felt safe in school and knew how to keep themselves safe personally and online. Pupils feel very confident that adults will help them if needed. The overwhelming majority of parents feel that the school keeps their children safe and well looked after.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not been effective enough to enable pupils to make rapid progress. As a result, by the end of key stage 1, many do not reach the standards that are expected for their age.
- Expectations regarding what pupils can achieve are often too low, especially for those



- pupils who are most able or middle-ability. As a result, very few make more than expected progress for their age.
- Teachers do not always do enough to ensure that pupils are being sufficiently challenged, particularly, but not exclusively, the most able. Consequently, in some lessons pupils find work too easy. They either complete it quickly or without needing to give it much thought. A few pupils are sometimes distracted. As a result, pupils miss out on being stretched further or extended in their learning.
- Teachers' systems for assessing progress on a day-to-day basis or within a lesson are not precise enough to pick up who needs further challenge. As a result, teachers do not always provide work that meets pupils' needs.
- In too many lessons pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to apply their learning and try out independently some of the skills and knowledge they have. The feedback offered to pupils to help them do this, particularly in mathematics, lacks the detail to support them to learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers are well organised and use a range of resources. They are good at involving pupils in their learning through imaginative and well-presented activities.
- Teachers have a good subject knowledge, particularly in terms of pupils using correct vocabulary for each subject. However there is a gap in teachers' understanding of how to deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. This includes the effective use of questions to deepen and develop their thinking.
- The teaching of phonics is improving. Pupils benefit enormously from having phonics taught earlier, in Nursery and Reception. The new system for precisely tracking pupils' development of phonics skills throughout school is enabling teachers to closely monitor progress and quickly intervene when pupils are struggling.
- Relationships between staff and pupils in the school are a strength. Leaders passionately believe in fostering trusting and respectful relationships in school. This has effectively laid foundations for good learning. There is a strong sense of nurture, where pupils feel safe and secure to learn.
- For those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, the support they are offered is broad, targeted and good-quality. Additional support is planned effectively, resulting in these pupils making good progress. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the progress of these pupils. This is particularly evident in the support of pupils who have challenging behaviour. In these instances, they play an important role in ensuring that the teachers' and other pupils' attention is not diverted from the focus on learning.
- Pupils who struggle with their learning are identified well and an effective range of learning opportunities are available to help them catch up and these pupils make rapid progress.
- The vast majority of parents who spoke to the inspector said that their children are taught well and make good progress in school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

■ The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.



- The importance placed on pupils' personal development and welfare is central and very visible in school. It is driven by the school's strong Catholic ethos and values. Staff and governors are passionate in their responsibility to ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment in which pupils thrive.
- The school offers an excellent personal, social, emotional and health curriculum that is woven into all that the school does. A very high profile is given to equipping pupils with valuable skills that promote the value and importance of well-being, respect, self-esteem and being responsible and well-balanced citizens. For example, pupils participate in philosophy. They also have learning passports that they get stamped every time they try out a new experience or develop a new interest. They are encouraged to have a voice and contribute to decisions about their school. They have opportunities to make a valuable contribution to the local community and beyond.
- Staff treat pupils with the utmost consideration and ensure that the school makes everyone feel welcome and valued. Adults constantly model respectful and caring behaviour in lessons, around school and in the way they engage with pupils. As a result, pupils behave similarly and are thoughtful and compassionate citizens.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who spoke to the inspector had nothing but praise for the school and the work of the staff. Parents said that their children were happy and well looked after. A number of parents were keen to say that their children 'loved' school and couldn't wait to come each morning. They put this down to the staff's skills at nurturing and building confidence, but also because staff go 'above and beyond' for the children.
- The vast majority of pupils throughout key stage 1 are confident learners and are happy to talk about their learning. Pupils told inspectors how proud they were of their school and how they were well looked after by adults.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection were very clear about what 'unkind' behaviour was and said that incidents were very rare. They were confident that teachers dealt with any unfriendly or negative language towards pupils quickly. All parents who spoke to the inspector said that the school deals appropriately with bullying or inappropriate behaviour and that it was very rare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves very well around school. They are polite, well-mannered, open doors for each other and adults and are keen to ask if visitors are enjoying their day. As a result, the school is a calm, orderly and purposeful place to learn.
- Pupils are eager to participate in lessons and generally work well. There is a productive atmosphere in classrooms, which means that most pupils have a positive attitude and visibly enjoy their learning. Occasionally, when lessons are not challenging enough, a few pupils lose concentration and interest. They become easily distracted and start to fidget. However, they are quickly brought back on task when an adult asks for their attention.
- Pupils consider behaving well to be very important and are delighted when they are recognised for their good conduct. As a result, they are fully aware of how to behave and the consequences of poor behaviour. They say that incidents of inappropriate



behaviour do happen but are rare, are dealt with quickly by teachers and that pupils respond sensibly.

- A number of pupils have difficulties in managing their behaviour. They are exceptionally well supported and very skilfully managed to ensure that their behaviour does not get in the way of their learning and does not distract others.
- The systems for checking absence are rigorous and conscientiously applied. Good attendance is rewarded and has a high profile in school. As a result, pupils' attendance is comparable to national averages. Pupils who are persistently absent are monitored closely. The leadership team has worked hard with this group of pupils and their parents and has had some notable successes, in terms of both increased attendance and improvements in the progress these pupils now make in their learning. The school's inclusion team, including the learning mentor, is very successful at supporting pupils and families who might be struggling. The learning mentor is extremely well respected and relationships with parents and pupils alike are excellent.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because, despite some improvements, too few pupils make fast enough progress, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The progress of the most able and the middle-ability pupils is not good enough. These pupils do not achieve well enough in any subject. This is because leaders and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and have not given enough attention to the possibility of pupils achieving at greater depth. Teachers have not used assessment effectively enough to provide pupils with sufficient challenge.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2017, a below-average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics and only a small number of pupils achieved higher than the expected standards under the new national curriculum.
- The headteacher reports that the number of families that take up the offer of pupil premium funding is low. Consequently, there is only an average proportion of eligible disadvantaged pupils in the school. Pupil premium funding is used to reduce barriers for these pupils and give them access to all aspects of the curriculum. However, similarly to all pupils, disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, do not make as much progress as they could.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the national screening check for phonics at the end of Year 1 has improved year on year, but is still below the national average. However, the school is now giving considerable focus to phonic development and the impact is beginning to be evident. Adults start teaching phonics in the Nursery class. This is built on in Reception and continues to be prominent through key stage 1. Pupils hear and use phonic sounds more accurately to read words. As a result, the school's assessment records show an increase in pupils' phonic skills for their age.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. The support offered by teachers and teaching assistants is effective and ensures that pupils succeed in their learning.
- Current school assessment information suggests that progress is improving. However,



it is too soon to say whether this will have sufficient impact on outcomes for pupils by the end of the year.

Early years provision

Good

- Many children start school with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age, and a few are well below. Their skills are particularly low in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. The good-quality provision offered to children ensures that they catch up and make good progress from their starting points.
- The improvements in provision, including the heightened focus on phonics, writing and number, are having a noticeable effect on learning. As a result, there have been improvements in the number of children achieving a good level of development. In 2017 this was much closer to children of a similar age nationally.
- Teaching is good. Adults demonstrate good subject knowledge and a thorough understanding of the children they work with. Routines are well established and there is a consistency of approach and manner across the three classes. Classrooms are organised effectively to provide children with a stimulating and varied learning environment. Activities are fun, capture the children's imagination and allow them to practise their skills. Adults are actively involved in the children's activities and play, which are often based on the theme of a story book. For example, a small group of children were using stick puppets to retell the story of 'Room on the Broom' by Julia Donaldson. The adult with them extended their learning by asking good-quality questions about what they were doing and modelling phrases and actions from the book.
- Teachers place importance on reading, writing and mathematical skills. Children have regular chances for children to write and use number. The development of language and speaking is also a high priority, along with building self-confidence. Adults spend valuable time with children to practise their letters and sounds. However, there is more to be done to increase children's confidence in their phonic skills by the time they leave Reception class. As a result, some children are not as ready as they could be to start Year 1.
- The assessment information that teachers gather on a day-to-day basis is used effectively to plan a curriculum for children that is both interesting and relevant. Adults regularly jot down notes and take photographs to document children's learning. This then contributes to teachers' assessment, tracking of children's progress and vibrant books created by adults to capture learning, activities and events through the year.
- Outdoors, children have plenty of opportunities to explore, using a range of equipment that encourages them to build, create and try out their ideas. They develop their imagination through magical areas, such as the 'fairy world', which has been lovingly created to ensure that children, whatever their ability, can immerse themselves in their learning.
- The leadership of the early years is good. There is a clear view about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Where actions have been taken to tackle issues, these have been successful. A focus on the importance of teamwork, sharing practice and the good-quality development of staff has ensured that adults are skilled and are confident to get the best learning from children.



- Safeguarding is effective and risk assessments for activities and events are thorough.
- Additional funding is used to provide resources and support for disadvantaged children. Leaders have a good understanding of the impact this has on children's learning and have taken steps to ensure that these children achieve well. As a result, given their starting points, disadvantaged children make similarly good progress to that made by other children.
- Children's behaviour is good. Adults are quick to provide support to children to help them understand the importance of being polite and learning social skills such as taking turns and consideration for others. Children play and learn together well and are very motivated.
- The strong emphasis on creating a caring and nurturing environment is evident from the very positive relationships that adults have with children and children have with each other. Staff consider strong relationships with parents as being crucial to establishing future positive attitudes to school life and encouraging parents to take an interest in their child's learning. For example, parents are regularly invited to join their child in the classroom for events and opportunities to learn how best to support them. Parents feel extremely positive about how much their child enjoys school and the progress they have made. Parents describe the adults in early years as 'amazing' and how they are 'kind and approachable'.
- Adults have good-quality links with the local providers and invest time getting to know new families and prospective new children very well. This ensures a smooth transition to the Nursery class. The transition from Nursery to Reception is well organised.



School details

Unique reference number 104677

Local authority Liverpool

Inspection number 10032797

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 Infant

School category Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils 3 to 7

Gender of pupils Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll 210

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair Maria Lawrence

Headteacher Elizabeth van de Waal

Telephone number 0151 220 2153

Website www.stceciliasinfants.org.uk

Email address ceciliasi-ht@st-cecilias-inf.liverpool.sch.uk

Date of previous inspection 14–15 November 2006

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than average.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of identified disadvantaged pupils is around the national average. However, the school is situated within an area which experiences a high level of social and economic deprivation.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The school holds a number of awards, including Basic Skills Quality Mark, Inclusion Charter Mark and School of Sanctuary Award.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.



Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. They observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and /cultural development. They also observed pupils at playtime and during lunchtimes.
- The inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books, including the books of children in the early years.
- An inspector listened to a small number of pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and SEN coordinator, the assistant headteacher and the early years leader. They also met with the colleagues responsible for safeguarding and attendance, and a group of middle leaders.
- The inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- A group of pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with an inspector and inspectors also spoke informally with pupils at playtimes and around school.
- An inspector talked briefly with a number of parents before school.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: information on pupils' attainment and progress; the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan; records of checks on the quality of teaching; and the school's curriculum planning documents. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Parker	Ofsted Inspector
David Blackburne	Ofsted Inspector



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