

St Silas Church of England Primary School

High Park Street, Toxteth, Liverpool, Merseyside L8 3TP

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders at St Silas Church of England Primary School have created a culture where 'each and every child' can flourish academically and socially in a warm and caring environment.
- Leaders, teachers and support staff provide an oasis of calm and security in the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are exceptional.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that provides rich experiences and exceptional opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Leaders are committed to doing everything they can to raise pupils' aspirations. They are highly successful in breaking down barriers to learning in order to improve pupils' life chances. Parents value this work.
- Leaders ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils. Consequently, pupils who speak English as an additional language, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make rapid and sustained progress over time.
- High-quality teaching and teachers' strong subject knowledge ensure that pupils in all year groups make exceptionally strong progress.
- Teachers are highly skilled. Their effective use of questioning contributes to the sustained progress pupils make.
- Governors use their skills and expertise to hold leaders to account and to ensure that the high standards of education are maintained.
- The outstanding provision in the early years means that the youngest children benefit from high-quality teaching in an environment that nurtures, excites and stimulate them as learners. Consequently, they make rapid progress from low starting points.
- Pupils are extremely polite and they have impeccable manners. Their exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning contribute to the excellent progress that they make.
- In the past, progress has been slower for a very small proportion of Year 1 pupils. However, leaders' successful action means that progress for these pupils is improving quickly.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school and its diversity. One pupil proudly stated: 'We speak lots of different languages in our school. If you came here, you could too.'

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the effective strategies in place to support learning, so that progress continues to accelerate for the small number of pupils in Year 1 who made slower progress in the past.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Outstanding leadership, high aspirations and an unrelenting focus on every child mean that this excellent school has improved considerably since the last inspection. Leaders' vision for the school underpins everything that they do. Consequently, they are very successful in ensuring that 'each and every child, no matter what their background or circumstance, reaches their potential and leaves us ready for the next stage of life.'
- The welfare and well-being of all pupils are at the very heart of leaders' work. Leaders provide education of the highest quality. Only the very best will do. In this nurturing environment, pupils thrive and make outstanding progress academically and in their personal development.
- Leaders at all levels demonstrate high levels of professionalism, drive and dedication. Leaders are committed to doing everything they can to raise aspirations and to improve pupils' life chances. Leaders model strong teamwork and an inspirational passion for learning to staff and pupils.
- Leaders have extremely high expectations of staff. They have developed rigorous processes to ensure that pupils benefit from outstanding teaching. Regular training for staff ensures that subject knowledge across each area of the curriculum is strong. Staff at all levels work with other colleagues and professionals to share their expertise. This contributes to the strong progress pupils make. Teachers new to teaching said that they are very well supported. Staff are proud to be part of this outstanding school.
- The development of strong leaders for the future is a strength of the school. Middle leaders have the same passion and determination as senior leaders to continually improve outcomes for pupils. Leadership of English and mathematics is outstanding. These leaders have rigorous systems in place to monitor their subjects. Teachers are regularly held to account for the progress that pupils make. Leaders use technology to improve the quality of their observations of learning, enriching the conversations that they have with teachers.
- Procedures for evaluating teachers' performance are carried out in a very supportive way. Leaders encourage staff to be reflective in their practice. Consequently, teachers regularly refine their teaching approaches to maximise the learning opportunities for pupils.
- Leaders have implemented a curriculum that is not only broad and balanced, but also exciting and creative, igniting the interests of pupils. Curriculum leaders have a very detailed understanding of their subjects. Work is carefully adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. Leaders have developed very effective systems for monitoring subjects other than English and mathematics. They work with other subject leaders across the trust to monitor the teaching of their subject by looking at pupils' work and pupils' progress over time.
- Pupils are given opportunities to use and apply their literacy and mathematical skills in other subjects. For example, in history, pupils develop their research skills in a series of lessons. They use new vocabulary correctly, gather information and produce accurate, well-written reports. Teachers skilfully use other curriculum subjects to develop pupils'

oral and written skills. For example, in art, Year 3 pupils studying the work of Georges Seurat firstly look at his paintings in detail. They then practise, and refine, their own work before producing evocative pictures in the style of pointillism. Pupils are reflective in their evaluations of their own paintings. One pupil said, 'I have used a lot of yellow in my picture because it's a bright colour and I wanted to show that it was a bright day.' Through the additional funding provided by the school, pupils also have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument.

- Leaders are highly skilled in identifying the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. They use the pupil premium funding very well to promote pupils' academic achievement and support their social and emotional development. Disadvantaged pupils often make better progress than other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have effectively developed activities that provide rich experiences to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Imaginative activities, such as the '50 things to do before you leave St Silas', underpin pupils' strong attitudes to learning and their calm and productive learning behaviours. High levels of cooperation and respect between pupils and adults contribute to the sustained progress that pupils make.
- Leaders use additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities very effectively. Leaders diligently look at information about pupils' progress and carry out observations of pupils' learning in lessons. This enables leaders to identify what these pupils need to learn and ensures that pupils receive the right support. As a result, pupils who find learning more difficult make the same outstanding progress as others in the school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language receive highly effective support to prepare them for their learning and the next stage of their education. Leadership in this area is particularly effective, meaning that this group of pupils makes exceptional progress.
- Leaders ensure that the considerable numbers of pupils who join the school at different points during the school year are given the support and care that they need to make outstanding progress.
- The physical education and sports funding for schools is used very effectively. For example, a coach is employed to deliver a range of sports activities such as horse riding. Pupils' participation in sports clubs has increased and enabled the school to take part in a number of tournaments. Increasing numbers of pupils take part in sport activities outside of the school day, for example, by playing with a local football team, or through membership of a martial arts club.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of leaders and staff. They appreciate the support and care given to their children and the opportunities that they have in school. They feel that leaders and staff value them as partners in their children's learning.

Governance of the school

- There are clear roles and responsibilities within the structure of the trust. The chair of the governing body works with trustees to ensure that governors have a range of

relevant skills and expertise. Governors attend training to keep up to date with new initiatives. They are very reflective on the challenges facing the local community and understand the priorities for the future of the school. Governors support and challenge leaders and they themselves are held to account by the trustees.

- Governors are regularly involved in the life of the school. They work effectively with leaders and share the passion and commitment of all who work at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders' work in keeping pupils safe is of the highest standard. Safeguarding is an integral part of the curriculum, and there is a strong culture of vigilance in which pupils flourish in a safe environment, feeling valued and cared for.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements, protocols and practices are fit for purpose. These include online safety and applying the filters necessary to keep pupils safe when using the internet.
- Staff work very closely with families, the local community and other professionals. Staff receive regular training and weekly updates on any potential areas of risk for the pupils. The curriculum is carefully planned, so that pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers and support staff demonstrate a strong knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn. They know their pupils well and they respond very effectively to their diverse community. Staff are skilled in supporting the high proportion of pupils who join school at different times of the year.
- Teachers have high expectations of themselves and of the pupils in their care. High-quality teaching in all year groups, and in all subjects, contributes to the substantial and sustained progress that pupils make.
- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to inspire and motivate pupils. They are very skilled in using questions effectively to tackle misconceptions, extend pupils' learning and to deepen their understanding.
- Very skilled support staff make a considerable contribution to the rapid progress that pupils make over time. For example, progress rates for pupils who have additional sessions from staff trained in teaching English as an additional language are making rapid progress which is allowing them to catch up quickly.
- Teachers have made changes to the way they teach phonics. Pupils' improved progress enables them to tackle unfamiliar words in their reading successfully. Pupils are confident when reading and talking to each other and adults. Highly skilled support staff work with pupils who make slower progress and, as a result, these pupils are catching up quickly.
- The environment around school and in classrooms is enhanced by beautiful displays, which celebrate pupils' achievements and support their learning. Leaders ensure that

these displays are always of the highest quality, reinforcing pupils' sense of pride in themselves and their school.

- Teachers ensure that parents can support their children's learning through a number of well-attended workshops and English language lessons. As a result, pupils enjoy completing their homework, which complements their work in school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. They show a genuine warmth and respect for each other. Pupils feel safe. They know adults care about them and that they will listen to them.
- The personal development and welfare of the most vulnerable pupils are given a high priority. The family support worker and other staff go 'above and beyond', on a daily basis. For example, pupils arriving at school early, with the 'walking bus', are eager and excited to attend the very popular breakfast club, run by support staff in school. Parents spoke very highly of the care given to their children and the respect that they receive from staff.
- Leaders provide an exciting range of enrichment experiences to raise aspirations and expand opportunities for pupils. For example, through the '50 things I need to do before I leave St Silas', pupils can fly a kite, make a daisy chain, learn to play an instrument and take part in a debate. Pupils enjoy the many clubs that they can be part of before- and after-school activities. Parents join their children in many of these activities. The 'rhyme time' singing session for the youngest pupils was very well attended during the inspection.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that there is no bullying in school and very little inappropriate behaviour. Pupils are confident that any negative behaviour is quickly dealt with in the appropriate way by staff. They are extremely proud of their school.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They understand their right to be safe and protected. Parents are included in many of these sessions to improve their own understanding in this important subject.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are friendly and polite. They have impeccable manners and high levels of respect towards each other and adults in the school.
- Pupils' conduct around school and in lessons is exemplary. Pupils behave in a calm and sensible way throughout the day. They socialise well and play harmoniously together.
- Pupils are eager to learn and value the opportunities provided by their teachers to

improve their learning. During lessons, conversations between pupils and other adults are very purposeful and focused on learning. The extremely positive attitude of pupils is one of the main reasons that they make such rapid progress.

- Leaders have a deep understanding of pupils' individual circumstances. The way they support the small number of pupils who sometimes demonstrate challenging behaviour is exemplary. Supported by the counsellor, staff are very skilled in dealing appropriately with any challenging behaviour. Staff successfully use a range of bespoke strategies to help individuals with their social and emotional development. This has improved behaviour and progress rates for these pupils.
- Attendance is above the national average. Staff have worked diligently with families to bring about rapid improvement in attendance for those pupils who were often absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress, often from very low starting points. Their progress in mathematics is in the top 10% of schools nationally in the 2017 provisional assessment information.
- Work seen in pupils' books and learning observed during the inspection confirm the accuracy of the school's own assessment information. Pupils in all year groups are making exceptionally strong progress. A higher proportion of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are working at the standards expected for their age compared to other pupils nationally. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth has also increased, particularly in mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is considerably higher than the national average. These pupils are very well supported by specialist trained staff. Consequently, pupils make rapid progress, often more rapid than others in the school. Specialist teachers support the considerably high proportion of pupils who join the school throughout the school year to catch up with their peers. As a result, these pupils make accelerated progress and do as well as others who have been at the school for a longer period.
- Leaders are highly skilled in identifying pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The thorough processes for identification ensures that pupils quickly receive the specific support that they need to overcome their barriers to learning. As a result, these pupils often make quicker rates of progress than their peers. Where slower progress is identified, detailed information is gathered and swift action taken, to ensure that pupils catch up quickly.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is higher than that seen nationally. Leaders have accurately identified the barriers to learning and skilfully use the pupil premium funding to overcome any impediment. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils are making rapid progress. The difference in achievement between them and other pupils nationally is diminishing very quickly.
- In 2015, leaders identified that not enough pupils reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. Swift action was taken and, as a result, pupils who attended the school's early years exceeded the standard nationally in both 2016 and 2017. Of the

many pupils who join Year 1 during the school year, the proportion attaining the phonics check is increasing.

- Leaders foster a love of reading in pupils from a very early age. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about reading. They benefit greatly from a library that is well stocked with high-quality literature that celebrates the rich diversity of cultures within the school.
- In the past, a very small proportion of pupils in Year 1 made slower progress than other pupils in the school. Leaders' swift action is already making a difference. A range of successful strategies are in place to help these pupils make up for lost time. Consequently, their progress is improving rapidly.
- Pupils know what to do to improve their work and they reflect well on their learning. Older pupils, in particular, are extremely articulate in explaining the processes and skills that they use to solve problems in mathematics. As a result, high rates of progress are maintained and any small gaps between groups are rapidly diminishing.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leadership of the early years is outstanding. Leaders and staff are motivated, which ensures that provision across all aspects of the early years is of the highest quality.
- Leaders and staff work closely with other professionals and each other to make sure that the best practice is shared. Ongoing professional development of staff is a priority and has contributed to highly skilled staff in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Leaders and staff work very closely with parents and, as a result, children settle quickly into a nurturing environment. Despite a very high proportion of children who enter Nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below those typical for their age, there is an ethos of 'no excuse', which results in high expectations for all children.
- Leaders have accurately identified that the key barrier to children's learning is language. As a result of the specialised training that staff receive, they use questioning effectively to encourage children to speak and listen, which expands children's learning and deepens their understanding.
- Leaders work very well with parents. They provide many opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's learning. For example, the sessions provided by the specialist language teacher support parents who speak English as an additional language. This contributes to the accelerated progress that children make during their time in the early years.
- The environment across the early years excites the children and enhances their learning and language skills. For example, the outside area has been developed to provide the children with access to a 'woodland' area, which is planted with shrubs and flowers in containers to depict the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood'.
- Activities are designed around developing exploration, being active and thinking. These skills are illustrated by three colourful dinosaurs, 'Explorasaurus', 'Activosaurus' and 'Thinkasaurus'. Staff effectively promote high levels of communication, cooperation and engagement. Very strong behaviours for learning are nurtured by staff, and children make excellent progress as a result.

- Teachers' assessments and their tracking of children's progress are exemplary. The information teachers gather is used effectively to develop a curriculum that is closely matched to the needs of the children.
- Leaders quickly identify children who have SEN and/or disabilities and provide them with effective support. Consequently, these children make rapid progress.
- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception is improving and is in line with others nationally. This illustrates children's rapid progress from their low starting points.
- Safeguarding arrangements in the early years are effective. All statutory welfare requirements, including those for two-year olds in school, are met. Well-established routines contribute to the children's ongoing safety and welfare.

School details

Unique reference number	141582
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10042498

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	291
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Cadwallader
Headteacher	Gina Donaldson
Telephone number	01517 276067
Website	www.stsilasblog.net
Email address	office@stsilas.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish on their website, including the governance and management structure of the multi-academy trust.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school is of similar size to other primary schools nationally and has a Nursery class.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups and those who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported because they have SEN and/or disabilities

is average.

- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school within the academic year is well above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, carrying out some joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils. They also talked with others informally around the school. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with three members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority and a member of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses and 14 written responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' survey. Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the 11 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about the school's performance and a selection of policies, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Moira Atkins	Ofsted Inspector
John Shutt	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Hunter	Her Majesty's Inspector

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