

St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School

Park Grove, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH41 2TD

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2016 and 2017 pupils at St Werburgh's did not achieve as well as they should. New senior leaders, working closely with the local authority, have begun to make improvements to address this issue.
- Governors are very supportive of the school. They are keen for self-improvement, quickly seeking external support when pupils' outcomes began to decline.
- Arrangements to develop the curriculum are improving steadily. However, due to the underdeveloped role of middle leaders, assessment in some subjects is inconsistent.
- The role of the middle leaders is at an early stage of development. Too much of the drive for improvement rests with senior leaders.
- Too few of the pupils who need to catch up receive the support they need early enough.
- Assessment is not used consistently across all year groups to ensure that pupils make strong progress in all subjects.
- The quality of teaching is variable across the school. This limits some pupils' progress and attainment.
- Activities in early years do not consistently challenge children's learning.
- Pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics is not as strong as it should be.
- Pupils' attendance is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is too high.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders know the school's strengths and weakness well. They are starting to take the steps necessary to improve the school.
- Although inconsistencies remain, teaching and assessment are improving. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive.
- Teaching assistants play a significant role in helping pupils learn by developing their thinking skills.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Pupils are well behaved, polite and friendly. Their understanding of different faiths, religions and different types of families is strong.
- Activities in the nursery and two-year-old provision are developing children's learning well.
- Provision for the most able learners is a strength due to the support they receive.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - improving pupils' overall attendance and reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- Raise pupils' achievement further by ensuring that:
 - leaders continue to take action to increase the consistency in the use of assessment to provide challenge and support for those pupils who need to catch up throughout the school.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders on pupils' outcomes by:
 - developing the role of middle leaders in evaluating the work of staff
 - improving the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in the foundation subjects.
- Improve provision in the early years by ensuring that teachers more effectively challenge children's learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not moved the school forward swiftly enough since the last inspection. The new headteacher and senior leaders, working closely with the local authority, have started to make improvements.
- From September 2017, the headteacher moved quickly to begin improving the school. She has received effective support and challenge from the diocese and the local authority. This has enabled her to address significant challenges in a positive manner. Staff support the changes that have been introduced to set a new direction for the school.
- Priorities for improvement, agreed by leaders and governors, address the key issues facing the school. However, it is too soon to accurately judge the impact of many of these new strategies. Leaders now check the work of staff more closely but they do not review the quality of pupils' work across all subjects.
- Leaders make sure that appropriate priorities for using the pupil premium funding are in place. While disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, their attainment is lower than that of other pupils nationally.
- The role of middle leaders in school improvement planning is underdeveloped. This affects the impact of the school's work in a range of subjects. Nevertheless, some leaders in the school are raising the quality of pupils' learning in their area of responsibility. This is especially the case in English and mathematics where the impact of actions on pupils' outcomes are successfully measured.
- Arrangements to develop the curriculum are improving steadily. As a result, the quality of pupils' work across the curriculum this year is improving. For example, leaders work with staff to consider how to focus teaching much more closely on the needs and interests of pupils at St Werburgh's. This work is beginning to increase pupils' progress in a range of subjects. However, due to the underdeveloped role of middle leaders, assessment in some subjects is inconsistent.
- The SEN coordinators have a clear overview of this area, checking the impact of funding. Extra funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well, particularly to employ additional teaching assistants to support pupils.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and where further attention is required. They make good use of information about pupils' attainment and progress when reviewing the school's effectiveness. They make sure that the assessment of pupils is becoming more reliable through links with other schools and with the local authority.
- The ethos of the school is successfully built on its Christian values. Leaders ensure that provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils are proud to belong to the school and valued the work they had taken part in on preparing them for life in modern Britain, such as lessons on democracy.

- Physical education and sport premium funding is spent effectively. Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities on offer, including fencing and archery. Participation is good and has also resulted in pupils entering local sporting competitions.

Governance of the school

- Governors are very supportive of the school. They are keen for self-improvement. They quickly realised that outcomes in school were declining and were proactive in quickly seeking external support.
- They are active in the life of the school and conduct focused visits. Consequently, they know the strengths of the school and many of the areas requiring improvement. Governors now ask challenging questions about outcomes for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- The governing body receives regular, detailed information on the attainment and progress of pupils and the standards they reach in comparison with national averages. They are also aware of the impact of support on pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Governors recognise the decline in outcomes and now focus attention on checking progress via the school's improvement plan. After the previous decline, they ensure that they ask challenging questions that hold school leaders to account in an effective manner.
- Governors ensure that the school provides good value for money. Decisions about spending are influenced by the main priorities for school improvement. They ensure that the pupil premium funding is carefully targeted towards disadvantaged pupils and is used increasingly effectively in accelerating the progress of these pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership of safeguarding in the school is shared across a number of key staff. This means that advice and support are readily available for staff and a close eye maintained on any concerns about pupils and/or their families. Leaders follow up any concerns with outside agencies.
- Records of safeguarding are clear, well maintained and stored securely. Staff and leaders have adequate training in keeping pupils safe. Parents and carers are provided with information about child protection in several ways, including through the school's website
- Checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are thorough. Careful records are kept of recruitment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good across the full range of subjects. There is variability in the quality of teaching which is reflected in pupils' inconsistent progress across key stages 1 and 2. Consequently, outcomes for pupils require improvement.

- The quality of pupils' work across the curriculum this year is improving but leaders recognise that there is more to do. As the role of subject leadership is very new in some subjects, pupils' progress is not always measured to inform future planning.
- Over time, the most able pupils have been challenged well. Most able pupils' work is stimulating and, as a result, they find learning inspiring and challenging. However, too often, work for other pupils, particularly for those who need to catch up, is not as well-matched to their abilities.
- Overall, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving because leaders make sure that teachers challenge them effectively. However, variable progress still exists across key stages 1 and 2. Differences in attainment between these pupils and other pupils nationally are not diminishing consistently and rapidly.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics has improved. Teachers often use good subject knowledge and questioning to encourage pupils to think hard about their responses and to extend their vocabulary. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils. However, this practice is inconsistent for other pupils. Some teachers are less skilled in identifying when pupils are ready to move on. As a result, pupils sometimes spend too long doing tasks that are not sufficiently demanding.
- School arrangements to assess pupils in English and mathematics have been revised this past year. Staff are starting to use information about pupils' learning with more precision when deciding on the next steps for pupils. Moderation activities with other schools and training from consultants have helped staff to be more confident and accurate in their assessment. Consequently, staff are now better equipped to monitor pupils' progress in these subjects.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. Teachers and teaching assistants now focus more attention on how to develop pupils' skills and knowledge in fluency and reasoning. Activities are more interesting and thought-provoking as a result. For example, in a key stage 2 activity, pupils were engaged in problem-solving. The teacher skilfully allowed pupils to discuss their reasoning with each other, developing their mathematical knowledge.
- Leaders are proactive in their efforts to foster a culture that promotes a love of reading in the school. They have implemented many schemes to incentivise pupils to read and reward them for it. The pupils spoken to were particularly animated about being 'buddy readers' with pupils from different year groups.
- Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting pupils' learning across the school. Support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is enhanced by the skilled contribution of teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are now being deployed effectively in most year groups. They are, for example, having a greater impact on learning for the most able pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, outcomes for these groups of pupils are improving.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are developing confidence in learning. This is shown through their good attitudes during lessons where they focus on their given tasks.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Pupils develop empathy for other people. For example, pupils have taken part in work about a wide variety of cultures. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they are proud to be part of the school community. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by opportunities to contribute to the school, for example, in leading assemblies.
- Pupils feel safe in school because they are well cared for and feel confident that members of staff will help them if they have any issues. Pupils know how to keep safe, including while online, because of the guidance they receive. For example, the school participates in safer internet week and involves other agencies in the delivery of online safety guidance.
- Activities in lessons and through workshops help pupils to develop a clear understanding of how they can keep healthy. For example, links with the local professional basketball team have helped pupils learn about the benefits of making healthy food choices and developing an active lifestyle. A significant increase in the number of pupils taking part in after-school clubs demonstrates the impact of this learning.
- Pupils said that incidents of bullying or name-calling were very rare. They had full confidence in reporting incidents to a member of staff. They were confident that they would be listened to and that appropriate action would be taken to resolve their concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement as leaders' actions to reduce persistent absenteeism for pupils have not had the desired impact and absences remain high. Similarly, pupils' overall attendance remains below the national average.
- Pupils are attentive in class and quickly follow instructions. They show respect to their teachers and there is little disruption to learning.
- The conduct of pupils around the school is commendable; pupils are polite and courteous. They play well together at social times.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors or who responded to the online questionnaire agree that their children are safe, happy and well cared for in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016 and 2017 pupils at St Werburgh's did not achieve as well as they should. Pupils' progress in mathematics in key stage 2 was weak, as was their attainment in all

subjects at key stage 1. Disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as well as they should across the school.

- Current pupils are making better progress, especially in mathematics, in some year groups. However, the lack of precise assessment information in some subjects sometimes prevents pupils from making even more rapid progress.
- From 2014 to 2016, pupils' ability to use phonics to read words by the end of Year 1 was below average. Recent improvements in the teaching of phonics are having a positive impact, but inconsistencies remain between key stages.
- Despite improvements in English, there are still inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' handwriting and spelling. For some pupils, this is impacting on the quality of their writing.
- Funding for disadvantaged pupils is increasingly targeted well, and pupils' progress is improving steadily. This support has enabled some pupils to catch up with their peers, particularly in key stage 2. Nevertheless, not enough of this group attain as well as other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress. They make individually significant strides forward in their learning. Those disadvantaged pupils who also have SEN and/or disabilities are progressing strongly. This is because of the skilled support they receive from teaching assistants.
- Teachers plan activities well to meet the needs of the most-able pupils. As a result of the challenge in their learning, these pupils make the rates of progress of which they are capable.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- From 2014 to 2017, the proportion of children in Reception reaching the expected standard remained below the national average. Leaders' plans for improvement, adults' expectations and use of assessment have not been strong enough. As a result, provision in the early years requires improvement.
- The quality of teaching does not offer sufficient challenge across the breadth of the early years curriculum. Furthermore, the level of challenge in the activities provided does not enable children to extend their thinking. Consequently, not enough children make good progress from their starting points.
- Children's learning in early years varies in quality. Sometimes, adults do not challenge children to think deeply or support children who have misconceptions. Activities, including those taking place outside, do not sustain children's interest well enough.
- Disadvantaged children did not historically achieve well compared to other children nationally. However, pupil premium funding is now being used effectively, particularly to support speech and language development for those who need it.
- Staff and children develop positive relationships across Nursery and Reception. However, in some areas, staff have not yet developed consistent routines which help children to enhance their learning.

- Relationships are positive between staff and parents across the early years. Parents appreciate this partnership and say that communication is effective.
- Records of children's work in Reception show that children are sometimes given sufficient challenge to make better than expected progress, but this is inconsistent. Adults do not use assessment well enough to plan children's next steps in learning to help most achieve as well as they should.
- Teaching in the nursery provides children with interesting and challenging learning experiences. Staff ensure that there is a stimulating learning environment for children and that activities have a sufficient level of challenge. For example, children are curious and use newly learned vocabulary when discussing musical instruments and their sounds. As a result of this more stimulating curriculum, children in Nursery make effective progress.
- Provision for two-year olds is also strong. Staff show that they are attentive to children's needs. Time spent caring for children is used as an opportunity to develop learning, especially in speech and language. Staff are aware when children need comforting and respond in appropriate ways.
- Arrangements for safeguarding children are effective and statutory welfare requirements are met. Adults supervise children well. They ensure that children are taught to be safe and independent in all areas of the early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	105091
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10045155

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lynn Ireland
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Murphy
Telephone number	01516 478 404
Website	www.stwerburghswirral.co.uk/
Email address	schooloffice@stwerburghs.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher took up post at the beginning of the autumn term 2017.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and receive support is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of SEN or an education, health and care plan is below average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups.
- Inspectors talked with pupils about the school and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders and members of the governing body. Inspectors also met with a representatives from the local authority, the Diocese of Shrewsbury and the headteacher of a local school providing support to leaders.
- Inspectors took account of nine responses to the online staff survey and 22 responses to the online pupils' survey.
- Inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day and took account of the three responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation of its current performance, the school's most recent information on the attainment and progress of pupils, information relating to the safeguarding of pupils, and the school's most recent information relating to the attendance of pupils.

Inspection team

Simon Hunter, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maureen Hints	Ofsted Inspector
Schelene Ferris	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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