

St Columba's Catholic Primary School

Lickey Road, Rednal, Birmingham, West Midlands B45 8TD

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2018

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive principal, head of school and governors have successfully created a culture of high expectations for all pupils.
- The multi-academy company (MAC) provides effective strategic leadership. Leaders and teachers benefit from the opportunity to learn from good practice in other schools within the MAC.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what could be better. They have put in place successful actions to bring about further improvements.
- Teaching is good. Staff plan work that matches pupils' needs, and expectations of pupils are clear. As a result, pupils are motivated to learn and make good progress.
- Pupils achieve above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Provision in the early years is good. Staff carefully plan activities to meet the needs of individuals. As a result, children make rapid progress.
- Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils show respect and consideration for others.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities receive targeted support to meet their different needs. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy school because their lessons are interesting and appropriately challenging.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. This is because staff have created a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school.
- Teachers regularly track pupils' attainment against national expectations for their age. However, leaders do not evaluate the progress of individuals and groups of pupils precisely enough.
- The curriculum is broad and interesting. However, some subjects are not taught in sufficient depth. This means that pupils do not develop specific skills in subjects such as geography and history.
- Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. However, they do not evaluate the impact of teaching or school improvement actions on pupils' outcomes sharply enough.
- More probing questioning by teachers would extend and deepen children's thinking.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve leadership and management by:
 - evaluating the impact of teaching and school improvement actions on pupils' outcomes more incisively
 - tracking the progress of individuals and groups of pupils more precisely so that even more pupils make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Further strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge so that they can provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop subject-specific skills across the curriculum, and in particular in geography and history
 - developing the quality of questioning to deepen pupils' understanding and extend their thinking.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have high expectations of staff and pupils. The executive principal and head of school have worked together to successfully create a supportive and aspirational culture. As a result, this is a good school and pupils achieve good outcomes.
- Thorough systems are in place to check what is working well and what needs further development. Consequently, leaders and governors have an accurate view of how well the school is performing. Leaders' improvement plans identify clear and appropriate priorities based on their regular monitoring of the school's work.
- Staff feel valued and respected by leaders. They appreciate the many opportunities for professional development that leaders provide. Leaders encourage staff to share and learn from good practice in schools within the MAC. This has contributed to raising the achievement of pupils, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Middle leaders are motivated and ambitious for pupils. They undertake regular monitoring and have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subjects they lead. Newly appointed leaders are having a positive impact on improving pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility, for example in science and religious education.
- The leadership of English is good. The English subject leader has clear expectations of how reading and writing are taught and all staff have been appropriately trained to meet these expectations. As a result, the quality of teaching in English is consistently good across the school and pupils make strong progress in the development of their reading and writing skills.
- The leadership of mathematics is similarly effective. The recent focus on increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge to reason and problem-solve is resulting in pupils making improved progress, particularly the most able pupils.
- Senior leaders make frequent checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They observe teaching, look at pupils' work and provide feedback to teachers about how to improve their practice further. However, monitoring activities are not focused sharply enough on the impact of teaching and leaders' actions on the learning of different groups of pupils.
- Effective use is made of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. For example, additional teaching for pupils who did not pass the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been successful in accelerating their progress. The targeted breakfast club encourages disadvantaged pupils to attend school regularly and on time.
- Leaders accurately identify pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They ensure that these pupils receive the support they need to overcome barriers to their learning. Leaders make effective use of external expertise to enable pupils with specific needs to make good progress. The newly appointed leader for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has quickly established a secure understanding of pupils' individual needs. She is using her expertise to begin to evaluate the impact that additional support is

having on the learning and progress of this group of pupils.

- Leaders make effective use of the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding to increase the opportunities pupils have to enjoy physical activities and participate in competitive sports. This provides pupils with access to a wide range of sports, including handball, gymnastics, orienteering, athletics, swimming and cross-country running. Specialist coaches also help staff to develop their skills in teaching physical education.
- Staff actively promote fundamental British values. They encourage pupils to show tolerance and respect to people from all backgrounds. Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of democracy and have opportunities to experience this for themselves, for example through the elected school council. This teaching prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders incorporate pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development into all aspects of the school's work. Enrichment activities, such as visiting places of historical and cultural interest, promote pupils' social and cultural understanding well. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures and visit different places of worship. They are committed to improving their own community; for example members of the school council are currently campaigning for traffic calming measures outside the school.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils develop knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects. However, the focus on pupils acquiring key skills in subjects such as history and geography lacks the rigour seen in English, mathematics and science.
- Leaders track the proportions of pupils working at the national expectations for their age in English and mathematics closely. However, leaders do not evaluate the progress individuals and groups of pupils are making from their starting points precisely enough. As a result, not all pupils are making the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Governance of the school

- The MAC board of directors and local academy committee governors work collaboratively to fulfil their responsibilities. The board of directors receive regular reports about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes. This enables them to have an accurate strategic overview of the school's performance.
- The local academy committee knows the school well. They have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Link governors meet regularly with subject leaders and keep the governing body well informed. Governors ask appropriate questions to support and challenge leaders about aspects of the school's performance.
- The MAC and local academy committee ensure the efficient management of the school's financial resources. Governors know how additional funding is spent and the impact this is having on pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff know pupils well and

ensure that their individual needs are met. As a result, the school is a safe environment for pupils and they are well cared for. Parents and carers agree that their children are well looked after at school.

- Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training and are up to date with safeguarding issues, including radicalisation and extremism. As a result, staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping pupils safe.
- Staff demonstrate high levels of vigilance and records show that they report any concerns promptly and in line with the school's safeguarding policy. Leaders consistently follow up concerns about pupils' safety and welfare. They work effectively with external agencies to provide appropriate help and support for pupils and their families.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that they have an adult they can talk to if they are worried or upset. They are confident that any concerns they raise will be quickly resolved. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good because teachers plan lessons that build systematically on pupils' existing knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Effective use is made of assessment information to plan learning that matches pupils' needs. Careful planning ensures that pupils of different abilities, including the most able pupils, receive work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge in English and mathematics to accurately model learning and provide clear explanations for pupils. As a result, pupils understand what they need to do in order to be successful. This enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- Well-trained teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the good progress pupils make. They work closely with teachers and have a good understanding of how to support pupils of different abilities so that they learn well.
- Teachers have a clear focus on what pupils are learning. They assess pupils' learning accurately and provide pupils with time to share their ideas and learn from each other. Staff target support and extra resources well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make progress that is in line with their peers.
- Teachers and teaching assistants check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions. Teachers provide pupils with ongoing feedback about what they are doing well and what parts of their work need improvement. Pupils respond positively to this feedback and use it to improve their work effectively.
- Phonics teaching is good. As a result, low-attaining pupils are able to use their phonics skills to read unfamiliar words accurately. Teachers ensure that pupils read books that sustain their interest and enjoyment while providing the right amount of challenge to improve their skills further.
- Writing is taught well. Teachers structure learning effectively and provide clear guidance to support pupils in using a wide and varied vocabulary. Pupils make strong

progress in their use of punctuation, spelling and grammar and write in sentences of increasing complexity.

- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils are developing strong skills in calculating using a variety of methods. There are opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to solve problems and to reason at a greater depth. As a result, pupils are making good progress, particularly in number.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make effective use of questioning in lessons to check pupils' understanding. However, they do not consistently ask questions that deepen pupils' understanding or challenge their thinking. This slows the progress of some pupils, particularly the most able.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in subjects such as history and geography is not as strong as it is in English and mathematics. This means that teachers do not develop pupils' skills in these subjects in sufficient depth.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and share their views in a thoughtful and respectful way. In lessons, they listen carefully to the ideas of others.
- Strong curriculum provision ensures that pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Visitors and special events teach pupils to make informed choices about how to avoid dangers. As a result, pupils are able to explain how to keep safe, for example when using the internet, while crossing roads and when playing in or near water.
- Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying and say that staff deal swiftly with any bullying incidents that occur. Leaders' records show that the small number of bullying incidents is reducing, reflecting the effective approach taken by staff. Parents agree that the school deals effectively with bullying.
- Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the many opportunities for them to hold posts of responsibility, for example as head boy and girl, school council representatives, science ambassadors or members of the eco-council. Pupils take these responsibilities seriously and can identify where they have made a difference to the school, for example by purchasing outdoor play equipment.
- The breakfast club provides pupils with a calm and positive start to the school day. Staff know pupils well and relationships are strong. Pupils enjoy a healthy breakfast and engage enthusiastically with the range of activities on offer.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders set high expectations for pupils' behaviour

and staff consistently apply these across the school. As a result, pupils know what staff expect of them and respond positively.

- Staff have created a calm and orderly environment. Pupils move around school sensibly and quietly. They are friendly, welcoming and polite. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy helping to look after it, for example by helping the site services officer to carry out health and safety checks.
- Pupils are keen to learn. They listen attentively to adults and generally concentrate well in lessons. Pupils respond to adults' instructions quickly. As a result, learning is able to continue with very little disruption. Pupils take a pride in their work and present it well.
- Pupils behave well at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They play positively together and take turns to share equipment.
- Effective strategies are in place to promote pupils' good attendance and punctuality. As a result, attendance is in line with the national average. Staff are rigorous in following up any absence to ensure that pupils are safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over time, pupils make good progress from their starting points. In 2017, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was in line with the national average. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that current pupils are making similarly strong progress. Almost all parents responding to Parent View agree that their children are taught well and make good progress.
- The proportions of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are rising. In 2017, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above national averages. The proportions of pupils achieving the higher standards were above national averages in reading and mathematics.
- In 2017, teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 2 showed that pupils' attainment was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportions of pupils working at greater depth were above national averages in reading and writing.
- School assessment information and work in pupils' books show that the majority of pupils are working at the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth is increasing and more pupils are achieving the higher standards of which they are capable. However, this is not yet consistent across all subjects and year groups.
- Pupils make good progress in phonics in the early years and key stage 1 because phonics is taught well. As a result, the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is consistently above the national average.
- The strong emphasis leaders place on pupils reading regularly at school and at home ensures that pupils achieve well. The use of high-quality texts has improved pupils' progress. As a result, most pupils read fluently and with understanding appropriate to their age. Pupils say they enjoy reading and the most able pupils talk enthusiastically

about their favourite books and authors.

- Current progress in writing is strong. Pupils of all abilities write with a good sense of audience and purpose. Leaders recognise that some boys, including the most able, need to make more rapid progress so that they achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Leaders carefully check the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and provide bespoke support to overcome any barriers to learning they may have. As a result, these pupils make progress that is at least in line with other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieve well in relation to their starting points because of the carefully targeted support they receive.

Early years provision

Good

- Most children start school with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. From their starting points, children make strong progress. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has been at least in line with the national average for the past three years. This means that children are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- The quality of teaching is good. Adults regularly assess how well children are learning and identify if they need more help or further challenge. The early years leader uses this information to carefully plan activities that meet children's individual needs. As a result, children make strong progress in their learning and development.
- Adults teach phonics effectively. They model sounds accurately and children learn how to use their phonics skills to spell simple words. The most able children make good progress and use and apply their phonics skills to spell more complex words and write in extended sentences.
- Work in children's books shows that individuals and groups of children are making good progress, particularly in writing and numbers. This is because adults engage children well in small group activities to extend their literacy and numeracy skills. They use questioning effectively to reinforce and develop children's learning.
- Adults expect children to use and apply the new skills they learn when working independently, for example building words using letter sounds. These high expectations mean that many children make rapid progress and become confident learners.
- The early years pupil premium is appropriately targeted to provide children with the support they need to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Adults' high-quality interactions and positive relationships with children create an environment where children work and play happily together. They focus well on helping children to develop their language and communication skills effectively.
- Children behave well. This is because adults have consistently high expectations and provide clear guidance to support children. As a result, children listen attentively to adults and follow instructions promptly. They take part in activities enthusiastically and

cooperate well by sharing and taking turns.

- The early years leader offers parents opportunities to be involved with their children's learning, for example through regular workshops to provide guidance on how to support their children's learning at home. Parents value these opportunities and a high proportion attend the sessions.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The early years leader has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in provision and is taking effective action to further improve children's outcomes. Accurate assessments enable her to track children's progress closely and identify gaps in their learning. As a result, children achieve well.

School details

Unique reference number	141669
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10042846

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Will Kearns
Executive Principal	Rebecca Nash
Telephone number	0121 675 4841
Website	www.stcolumba.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@stcolumba.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Columba's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy in April 2015. It is part of the Lumen Christi Catholic Multi-Academy Company (MAC), which comprises six local Catholic schools. The MAC is governed by a board of directors who have responsibility for all of the schools. They delegate certain responsibilities to a local academy committee at each school.
- When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be 'good' overall.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs, or education, health and care plans, is below the national average.

- There is one class in each year group from Reception to Year 6.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are 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 pupils' learning in 14 parts of lessons. Seven of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. One inspector visited the breakfast club.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke formally with a group of pupils as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school. They also took account of the views expressed in the 38 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors listened to a group of pupils read and talked to them about their reading.
- Inspectors extensively examined the quality of work in pupils' writing, mathematics, science and topic books.
- Discussions were held with the executive principal, head of school and other school leaders. The lead inspector met with eight school staff to gather their views on safeguarding, school improvement, professional development and pupils' learning.
- The lead inspector met with three local academy committee members and the chair of the local academy committee. A meeting was also held with the accounting officer for the MAC.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, information about pupils' progress, records relating to safeguarding and attendance, minutes of meetings of the local academy committee and information on the school's website.
- Inspectors took into consideration the 11 responses to Parent View. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke to staff and took account of the views expressed in the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Claire Jones, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector

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