

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy

Conwy Court, Castlefields, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2JJ

Inspection dates

20–21 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 school provides a nurturing, safe environment where pupils can flourish.
- Leaders, the trust and governors have worked effectively to bring about improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- The acting headteacher provides strong leadership. Since her appointment, the school has continued to improve apace.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points to attain at least the standards expected for their age by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan interesting activities that engage pupils and promote their good progress.
- Children in early years get off to a good start and make good progress.
- Governors visit the school regularly and support improvement effectively. The trust provides strong support and challenge to school leaders.
- Pupils are happy at school and behave well. They show pride in their school. They show respect for staff and each other.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' learning in a range of subjects. Pupils enjoy the good range of after-school clubs on offer.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation are, at times, not high enough.
- At times, teaching does not provide sufficient challenge for pupils, and children in early years.
- Despite pupils' positive attitudes to school and the school's work to promote their good attendance, some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should.
- Leaders' systems for tracking pupils' progress do not give a clear enough picture of the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, by:
 - ensuring high expectations and challenge for pupils, and for children in early years
 - ensuring a more consistent approach to presentation and handwriting.
- Refine systems for tracking progress to check more closely on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Work more closely with families to raise attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since becoming an academy, the school has experienced changes to leadership and staffing. Leaders, governors and the trust have worked effectively to ensure greater stability in leadership and to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Success is reflected in the improvements in national test results in 2017.
- The acting headteacher has provided determined leadership to ensure that improvements to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching have been sustained. Under her leadership, since September 2017, the school has continued to improve.
- Leaders have created an ethos of positive relationships, mutual respect and commitment to further improvement. Staff report that they are well supported, and morale is high. Staff value the professional development opportunities offered, which help to improve their skills.
- The quality of teaching has improved as a result of effective leadership. Regular monitoring of teaching identifies areas to develop further, and training needs. Staff training in the teaching of phonics and mathematics has led to clear improvement in staff skills and pupils' progress in these areas.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of activities to develop learning. Pupils' learning is enriched by the good range of extra-curricular activities such as gymnastics, computing, sewing and weaving, and rock choir. Recently, this has developed to include more visits, such as to a local historic site and museum to broaden pupils' experiences and understanding of their local community.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, and extends their understanding of British values. Pupils show a respect for each other and for those who may be of different backgrounds, cultures or faiths from themselves. Older pupils talk confidently about their understanding of democracy as they describe elections for members of the school council.
- Under the acting headteacher's guidance, subject leadership has developed well. The mathematics and early years leaders, although relatively new to their roles, show a good understanding of their areas of responsibility and have contributed well to improvements to pupils' progress. The special educational needs coordinator has recently left the school and the headteacher has taken on that role in the interim until a replacement can be found.
- Funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well to ensure that pupils are supported in their learning. Provision of extra staff, resources and a breakfast club help to ensure that these pupils make good progress in their learning.
- The acting headteacher has introduced new systems to track and monitor pupils' progress. As a result, staff and leaders have a clear picture of pupils' progress individually and across year groups. However, they do not give a clear enough overview of the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities to enable governors and trustees to hold leaders more firmly to account.

Governance of the school

- Members of the local governing body know the school well and are passionate about further improvement. They have been proactive in supporting the school through changes to leadership and staffing. Along with the trust, they are working towards the appointment of a permanent headteacher for the school from September 2018.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching and learning in the school. They visit for themselves to confirm this. They have a good understanding of how funding is spent and manage finances well.
- Trust directors are very knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and through regular visits and reviews ensure that leaders are supported and challenged in bringing about improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make safeguarding a high priority. Staff have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues and are clear about the procedures to follow should they have concerns about a pupil's welfare.
- Staff understand the need to be aware of potential risks and are knowledgeable about issues such as child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and female genital mutilation.
- All staff and parents and carers who spoke with the inspector agree that pupils are kept safe and are well looked after. Parents praise the kind and caring staff, and comment on the vigilance of leaders in ensuring that the school premises are safe and secure.
- Pupils learn to keep themselves safe, including online. They report that the staff and leaders keep them safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good, and over time has led to improvements in outcomes for pupils. The impact of recent training has seen further improvements to the quality of teaching of phonics and mathematics.
- Staff carefully plan activities for pupils and ensure that lessons are well-resourced. This means that lessons run smoothly, and no time is lost promoting pupils' learning.
- Teachers often use questioning successfully to encourage pupils to think and apply their skills. For example, key stage 2 pupils who were engaged in a measuring problem-solving activity were asked to think how they would work out the 'biggest difference' in measurements. This provided challenge for pupils as they sought to identify how they would work this out and why.
- At other times, teaching does not provide enough challenge. Occasionally, tasks are repetitive, or questioning does not encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning.

- Teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to learn to write for different purposes. Pupils in upper key stage 2 showed a good understanding of the type of language to use in writing a newspaper report, and why this was needed.
- Expectations for pupils' presentation of their work are, at times, not high enough, particularly in writing. Although some pupils learn to write neatly and legibly, this is not consistent across the school.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. The work in pupils' books shows that they are making good progress through effective teaching of basic skills and problem-solving activities. A whole-school approach to ensuring that pupils have a secure knowledge of basic number skills is paying dividends in helping pupils to make better progress and remedy gaps in their knowledge due to previously weaker teaching. For example, pupils gain from a brief daily focused session to reinforcing these skills.
- Phonics is taught effectively. Staff are making good use of the recently introduced approach to teaching this subject to ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points. Pupils who read to the inspector showed confidence in applying their knowledge of letter sounds to read unfamiliar words.
- Teachers encourage pupils to have an interest in reading and develop a love of books. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and how they enjoy reading both at school and at home. Younger pupils show a growing understanding of stories and some can talk about their favourite characters in books.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' self-confidence and positive attitudes to learning grow in this nurturing and inclusive environment. Staff develop positive relationships with pupils and successfully promote the school's ethos of mutual respect.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school. They talk with pride about their responsibilities as school councillors, team captains or playground monitors. They are enthusiastic about the range of extra-curricular activities they are able to attend. Pupils say that school is 'fun' and report that they appreciate regular trips to Norton Priory, a nearby historic site.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are knowledgeable about how to stay safe online and say that they are taught about this in school.
- Pupils show a good understanding of the different types of bullying; they report that it hardly ever happens and if it did they are confident that staff would sort it out.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Pupils' conduct around school and in lessons is good. They line up sensibly to move around the school and listen carefully to staff's instructions. This helps the school day to run smoothly and contributes positively to pupils' progress.
- Pupils engage well with their learning. They are keen to do their best. On occasion, when learning is not closely enough matched to their needs, pupils can lose interest and become distracted.
- Pupils' good behaviour is reflected in the absence of any recent incidents of bad behaviour, bullying the school records. Staff and parents report that behaviour is good in the school and well managed.
- Leaders work hard to raise the levels of attendance. A reward system is in place, and leaders do not shy away from issuing penalty notices to parents where pupils are absent from school too often. The school works closely with families to improve attendance, including for those from a Traveller background. While there is clear evidence of significant improvement over time for some pupils, attendance remains an area for further improvement.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects. Scrutiny of pupils' books and school information shows that the improvements in progress and attainment seen in the 2017 results have continued.
- Published data for 2017 showed that in key stage 2 pupils made above-average progress in writing and mathematics and average progress in reading. Pupils' attainment was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represented a marked improvement in attainment from 2016 in writing and mathematics.
- In key stage 1, pupils' attainment rose in 2017 to just below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Current pupils are making good progress in phonics. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is improving. The impact of improvements to teaching is shown in the improved proportion on track to attain this standard, which is much closer to the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. There is evidence that in some year groups differences are diminishing.
- The most able pupils make good progress when learning is closely matched to their needs. However, at times, teaching does not ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. In 2017, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards improved in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 and in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1. However, these standards remain below national averages.
- Pupils from a Traveller background are well supported to catch up on learning following any absences, to improve attendance and to make good progress.

Early years provision

Good

- The current early years leader has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. She has made improvements to provision in the early years which have resulted in improvements to children's progress. In 2017, 70% of children attained a good level of development by the end of Reception Year. This represents good progress from their starting points which, for most children, are below those typical for their age.
- Children enjoy their learning and engage happily in the activities provided. They behave well and show a strong sense of security in their environment. For example, they happily line up to move to another area of the school.
- Teaching is effective. Staff provide a range of interesting activities which relate to children's interests. For example, children enjoyed putting pictures in order to tell a familiar story and then acting it out using masks and other props.
- Staff have a good knowledge of children's skills and capabilities. They monitor children's learning closely and provide extra support when needed to ensure that children make good progress.
- Staff generally question children well to develop their learning. However, at times teaching does not stretch children's learning sufficiently. For example, staff sometimes do not engage fully in children's outdoor learning or ask questions to make children think.
- Staff establish a positive partnership with parents. Parents say they feel well informed about their children's progress. They praise the 'stay and learn' sessions provided, and say they feel involved in their children's learning.
- A positive partnership with the on-site pre-school helps to ensure that children have a positive transition into school.

School details

Unique reference number	141980
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10046607

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	90
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Antoinette Woodhead
Acting Headteacher	Nedra Sothern
Telephone number	01928 568936
Website	www.st-augustines.halton.sch.uk
Email address	head.staugustines@halton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is an academy, led by the Solopia Trust. This is the school's first inspection as an academy.
- This is a much smaller-than-average primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Around 12% of pupils are from a Traveller background.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs, or education, health and care plans, is below the national average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since becoming established as an academy in July 2015, the school has had changes to staffing and leadership. The acting headteacher took up post in September 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning throughout the school. Four observations were carried out jointly with the acting headteacher. In addition, the inspector scrutinised pupils' work books and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the chair of the governing body and four other governors, the acting headteacher and middle leaders, and a director of the trust. The inspector also held a meeting with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspector looked at a range of information produced by the school, including information on pupils' progress and attainment, behaviour and attendance, procedures for safeguarding and the school's own evaluation of its work. She considered reports to the governing body, minutes of their meetings and the school's plans for further improvement.
- There were insufficient responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for the inspector to analyse. The inspector considered the responses of two parents who expressed their views via text message to Ofsted. The inspector took into account responses to a questionnaire conducted by the school and spoke to parents during the inspection.
- The inspector also took account of the 10 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the online pupil questionnaire to consider.

Inspection team

Elaine White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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