

St John Vianney Catholic Primary School

Elton Head Road, Sutton Heath, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 5BT

Inspection dates

14–15 March 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, senior leaders and governors have not acted quickly enough to improve the quality of teaching when pupils' progress slowed. The progress of pupils after they leave Reception is too uneven across year groups.
- The executive headteacher has rapidly improved many aspects of the school. However, some key changes, including to the school's assessment and tracking systems, have not been in place long enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.
- Standards are not consistently good enough across the school. Despite better use of the pupil premium funding this year, too few disadvantaged pupils make the progress expected of them.
- Leadership in curriculum areas other than English and mathematics is underdeveloped. As a result, information about pupils' progress across the curriculum is limited.
- In lessons, teachers do not consistently challenge pupils, particularly the most able, to think hard about their learning.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to practise mathematics skills or write at length and independently in a range of subjects.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. There is variation in how teachers use assessment to best effect to identify gaps in learning or match work to pupils' abilities.

The school has the following strengths

- Good teaching and provision in pre-school and the Reception class ensure that children enjoy learning and make a good start to school life.
- Positive developments in teaching and recent assessment information indicate that the school's current leadership has the capacity to secure further improvement.
- The curriculum is rich and engages pupils' interests well.
- Pupils behave well, are happy, feel safe and enjoy very good care and support.
- Pupils' personal development is good and relationships with staff are warm.
- Leaders, staff and governors are ambitious for all pupils. They recognise how urgent it is for the school to improve.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching rapidly in order to increase the rate of pupils' progress and the standards reached by:
 - ensuring that teachers use precise assessment information to identify and address any gaps in pupils' learning
 - continuing to improve the progress made by disadvantaged pupils across the school so that differences in attainment between this group and other pupils nationally diminish quickly
 - making sure that teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematics skills and write independently and at length in a range of subjects
 - ensuring that pupils continue to develop a rich vocabulary which they use to good effect when they write
 - ensuring that all pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, are consistently provided with work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Further increase the impact of leadership and management by continuing to:
 - develop and embed the new systems and strategies already introduced to improve leadership and management and pupils' learning
 - develop the accuracy of teachers' assessment, including in the foundation subjects
 - review, and adapt where necessary, the strategies used to support disadvantaged pupils and those at risk of underachievement so that progress accelerates and any differences in learning diminish quickly
 - develop the effectiveness of the new tracking system to ensure that all leaders and governors have an accurate picture of pupils' outcomes in all subjects
 - help subject leaders to develop the skills necessary to support colleagues effectively
 - ensure that governors appoint a substantive headteacher and create a stable senior leadership team as soon as possible.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Over time, senior leaders and governors have not ensured that the school has maintained the good performance identified at the previous inspection. Progress is uneven and the proportion of pupils working at or beyond the standard typically expected for their age varies across the school.
- The executive headteacher is providing strong interim leadership for the school, albeit on a part-time basis. As a leader with proven expertise in school improvement and developing others as leaders, the executive headteacher has very quickly identified the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to overcome the current weaknesses.
- The executive headteacher works closely with the deputy headteacher, who has temporarily taken on the role of head of school. The executive headteacher has made effective use of a range of external support, for example to improve the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics.
- There is clear evidence of relevant training for teachers and growing collaboration to share effective practice, both within the school and within the local network of schools. Leaders put in place more intensive, individualised support and professional development when they are required. This approach has helped bring about improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Historic weak assessment practices have been a contributing factor to declining results. Inaccurate assessments over time provided an unrealistic picture of the progress made by pupils. The school is now addressing this by using new assessment procedures to ensure that a more accurate picture is captured. A new tracking system provides leaders and governors with an increasingly accurate and comprehensive analysis of pupils' performance.
- Improvement plans identify the appropriate priorities and specific timescales for actions. Exact monitoring activities describe how leaders will evaluate the impact of their work.
- Senior leaders demonstrate a clear focus on improving teaching and have introduced an efficient system to manage the performance of teachers. Leaders hold teachers to account well for the pupils in their care.
- Leadership of English and mathematics has developed well, following a range of external support. The leaders of these subjects provide increasingly effective guidance for colleagues. The roles of other subject leaders are developing but too few have had time to contribute fully to improvements in teaching at present. Neither of the teachers responsible for leading the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities yet holds the required statutory qualification.
- Disadvantaged pupils are increasingly well catered for. The additional funding is used wisely to support their social and emotional needs. The progress of this group is improving. Assessment is now accurate and leaders and teachers know pupils well. However, because systems to check on the effectiveness of interventions are at an early stage of development, leaders are not able to ensure that progress is rapid

enough to overcome previous weaknesses in learning.

- The teachers responsible for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities ensure that additional funding is deployed well to meet their needs.
- The sport premium funding is used to good effect. Specialist coaching is helping develop pupils' skills in a range of sports across the school. The coach also works with staff to improve their own teaching of physical education. In addition to this, participation in extra-curricular sport has increased. Pupils are motivated by the new alternative activities provided, including the archery sessions.
- The curriculum offers a rich, broad and balanced experience for pupils. Pupils are excited by it, explaining that learning is fun. Subjects are brought together through interesting topics which help make links between subjects and deepen understanding. However, the assessment system does not yet provide enough information about how well pupils are doing in subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result, teachers do not challenge the most able pupils enough.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for. Pupils respect other faiths and cultures and they discuss ethical issues maturely. They are taught values in a meaningful way through the curriculum and assemblies. Visitors support pupils' learning, for example when they talk to them about road safety.
- The very large majority of parents and carers who spoke to the inspectors or contributed to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that their children are happy at the school and are well cared for. However, a significant number of parents who wrote to the inspectors were concerned that the substantive headteacher post remains unfilled. Some parents also expressed concern about the impact of staff absence on the current Year 5 class. This class has had a relatively high number of temporary teachers this year due to staff absence. Parents report that this has unsettled their children and that they consider that their progress has been hampered as a result.
- Much of the improvement work since the start of this academic year has relied on external support. This work has had a positive impact on the quality of leadership and management and that of teaching, learning and assessment. However, St John Vianney's staff are developing the capacity to lead further improvements themselves.
- In March 2016, the local authority identified concerns about aspects of the school's performance. Since that time, staff from the local authority have provided support for the school. Despite this useful support, not all of this work has been successful in enabling the school to maintain the good performance seen at the previous inspection. However, the archdiocese and the local authority have worked together to help the governing body to identify an interim executive headteacher to lead the school until a substantive appointment can be made.

Governance of the school

- Governors are aware that, over time, they have not held leaders securely to account for the school's performance. They did not seek or receive enough information about the performance of the school or challenge performance information strongly enough when standards dipped.
- Supported by the local authority, governors have taken decisive action to strengthen their ability to hold the school to account. An audit of the governing body's role in supporting and challenging leaders has been undertaken and the prompt action to strengthen these areas is proving effective.
- The executive headteacher's reports are relevant and informative. Governors have assessment information presented to them in a meaningful way. This means that they understand any weaknesses in pupils' progress. Governors make regular visits to find out, first-hand, about school life. As a result, the governing body understands the needs of the school well. Governors now provide effective support for school leaders. They ask probing questions and ensure that they receive detailed answers to enable them to hold leaders to account.
- Governors carry out their statutory duties rigorously, including in relation to safeguarding. They have recently begun to ensure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium funding, is deployed appropriately, for example to overcome barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. They have supported the appointment of the parent mentor, who provides support for pupils and families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.
- Governors have started the process of recruiting a new headteacher.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders and governors place pupils' safety and well-being at the heart of the school's work. They ensure that systems are understood and followed by all staff. Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding and are vigilant in looking out for any signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Systems for recording any concerns relating to safeguarding are in place. These are currently being reviewed to increase the efficiency of leadership through the use of technology. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are tenacious in following up any concerns.
- The curriculum is well developed to enable pupils to keep themselves safe and understand and manage the risks facing them in their life beyond the school gates.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not been effective enough to enable pupils to make consistently good progress across the school. As a result, too many pupils do not reach or exceed the standards that are expected for their age.
- School information and inspection evidence show that action taken by the interim senior leadership team has led to improvements in teaching. Teachers are making better use of more accurate assessments in reading, writing and mathematics than

previously and, as a result, all groups are making stronger progress than in recent years.

- Nevertheless, teachers do not always do enough to ensure that pupils are challenged sufficiently, particularly, but not exclusively, the most able. Consequently, pupils sometimes find learning too easy. At times, they are not moved on quickly enough to tasks that deepen their understanding.
- A range of learning opportunities are available for pupils who do not achieve as well as they should. However, teachers do not identify precise gaps in pupils' learning, often caused by previous weaknesses in teaching. This means that progress is not always rapid enough to enable pupils to reach the standards expected of them.
- Teaching in Year 5 requires particular attention. The turbulence in teaching this year was caused by staff changes, many of which were unavoidable. As a result, pupils have become unsettled and have not made enough progress. Leaders have recently secured a stable staff and teachers are now in a better position to take rapid action to identify and fill the gaps in learning which are evident in all subjects.
- Improvements in the teaching of mathematics are enabling pupils to develop greater fluency in their basic skills, including calculation and the recall of number facts. Pupils are offered regular opportunities to develop their reasoning and thinking skills. However, opportunities to practise mathematics skills in other subjects are underdeveloped.
- Pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation have developed well as a result of improvements in teaching. However, the quality of their written work can vary in quality and content, especially when they write independently and in subjects other than English. Improvement in the teaching of reading has developed pupils' fluency and comprehension of the texts they read. However, too few pupils use a rich vocabulary when they write independently.
- Relationships between staff and pupils in the school are very positive. There is a strong sense of nurture, where pupils feel safe, secure and able to learn. Lessons typically provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning and contribute to lively discussions about the topics being taught.
- Pupils hold highly positive views about the improvements in science teaching this year. Many described with great enthusiasm how they are able to plan and carry out experiments to test out their theories. For example, pupils in Year 6 made helicopters to find out more about air resistance and gravity.
- Teachers are well organised and use a range of resources. They are good at involving pupils in their learning through imaginative and well-presented activities.
- The teaching of phonics and early reading skills now takes place regularly and has been improved through well-targeted staff training. Children in the early years and in key stage 1 use their understanding of letters and the sounds they make to work out unfamiliar words. Older pupils read with fluency and expression and talk knowledgeably about the books they have read. The school library is a popular resource. Pupils are particularly proud of the class books they produce each term.

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 well cared for. They display attitudes that are considerate and respectful of the views of others in this highly inclusive school. Underpinned by the Christian ethos of the school and through assemblies and classroom teaching, pupils are taught about prejudice, equality and being inclusive of others, regardless of their background. Pupils have a good understanding of important values. This is preparing them well for life in the local and global communities.
- The school helps pupils understand and consider important issues, which means that they are able to talk maturely and openly about their views. Year 3, for example, were thinking about gender stereotyping as they read the 'Beware of Girls' and 'Beware of Boys' books. Furthermore, pupils have been well taught about e-safety and are aware of the dangers associated with social networking.
- Pupils enjoy taking on roles of responsibility. They have a voice in the development of the school. The head boy and head girl are confident and articulate and can talk knowledgeably about the things they like in their school. Members of the school council act as ambassadors for the school and are elected by pupils. The voting system has led to pupils being able to explain what democracy is, both within the school and in the context of the wider world. School councillors are proactive, for example promoting healthy eating by organising a competition for pupils to design a healthy lunchbox.
- The school provides well-attended breakfast and after-school clubs for pupils. Pupils of all ages enjoy the activities and feel safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils work hard in lessons and concentrate well. Attitudes to learning are highly positive. Pupils are keen to learn and concentrate well in lessons and most work is well presented.
- Teachers are quick to make sure that occasional disruptions are smoothly dealt with in line with the school's behaviour policy. Pupils who sometimes find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are helped to do so sensitively yet firmly by the adults. Pupils, staff and governors, who visit the school regularly, commented positively on the improvement in behaviour this academic year. Adults described the school as being calm and pupils said that learning is seldom disturbed now.
- The vast majority of pupils move around the school sensibly and conduct themselves well. Pupils of different ages get on well together and older pupils enjoy taking care of younger ones. Very occasionally, a small minority of pupils do not show sufficient consideration to others at break and lunchtimes and this can sometimes lead to boisterous behaviour which hampers the play of others. Senior leaders are taking steps to provide more structured activities at lunchtime. Local authority staff are training lunchtime supervisors to help pupils get the best out of social times.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and what to do if they have any concerns. A small minority of parents expressed concerns about behaviour

and bullying in the school in responses to Parent View or when talking to inspectors. School records show that incidents of bullying are decreasing. School policies are followed robustly to ensure that issues are addressed. The very large majority of pupils who responded to the inspection questionnaire stated that bullying is dealt with well by staff if incidents occur. This is consistent with the school's own questionnaire for pupils.

- The leadership of behaviour has been strengthened, with policies revisited and systems established to sharpen identification of issues and reviews of actions to bring about improvements.
- Leaders are diligent when implementing attendance procedures, and attendance is broadly average. The school gives attendance a high profile. Numerous displays throughout the school encourage good attendance. Each class's attendance figures are clearly on display for all to see. The system for analysing pupils' attendance is very effective and the support of the parent mentor is helping those pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who find it difficult to attend school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils who left the school at the end of Year 6 in 2017 made progress that was below the national average. In particular, progress in reading and mathematics was in the bottom 10% of all pupils nationally. This weak progress was largely due to a delay in reacting to changes in assessment and the raised expectations inherent in the new curriculum. Historically, leaders' expectations of pupils were too low.
- The proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standards for their age in mathematics and spelling, grammar and punctuation was particularly low. Pupils' attainment showed little improvement on the year before and few pupils attained the higher standard in these subjects or in reading.
- In Year 2 in 2017, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard was similar to that of all pupils nationally. This showed an improvement on the previous year, when attainment in reading, writing and mathematics had been lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard remained lower than average but improved from the very low levels of the year before.
- Over time, pupils' ability to use phonics to read words by the end of Year 1 was lower than average and it was particularly low in 2017. Recent improvements in the teaching of phonics are having a positive impact in the current key stage 1 classes.
- In recent years, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils by the end of key stage 2 has been much lower than that of other pupils elsewhere. The attainment of this group of pupils has been well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Very few attained standards above those expected for their age. Funding for disadvantaged pupils is targeted well this year and pupils' progress is steadily increasing. This is beginning to diminish the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers but there is more to do if they are to reach their full potential.
- The emotional, social and behavioural needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are met very well. Although improving, over time the progress made by this group remains variable.
- Across the school, current pupils are making better progress because of improvements

in the quality of teaching and assessment, and standards are rising. Nevertheless, the lack of precise assessment information in some year groups prevents pupils from making the rapid progress needed to overcome gaps in previous learning. Progress across the school remains variable and too few pupils consistently reach standards exceeding those for their age.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the early years get off to a good start in the school because they are taught well. They are happy and well behaved and enjoy excellent relationships with other children and staff.
- The early years leader and lead practitioner in the 'First Steps' pre-school provision are well organised. They demonstrate good leadership skills and are knowledgeable.
- Staff know children very well because they assess them regularly and accurately. They use this assessment information to plan interesting learning activities that challenge children and ensure that they develop a range of knowledge and skills.
- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of Reception is consistently higher than the national average. Children make at least good progress over time, as is shown in their work and school records. An increasing proportion of children join the school at a level that is typical for their age, but the range of abilities is widening and varies from year to year. Children are well prepared for life in Year 1.
- Children read well in the early years because of the quality of phonics teaching. In the Reception class, they get regular opportunities to write when they learn in sessions led by the adults. A range of motivating and stimulating free-choice activities encourage children to write when they play and learn independently.
- Staff support children well during indoor and outdoor activities. This leads to at least good progress for all. They consistently ask challenging questions that enable children, including the most able, to think deeply about their learning. During the inspection, children were fascinated by the seeds they were growing. The magnifying glasses provided were put to good use as children observed the beans as they germinated. Adults teased out understanding and moved learning on well through careful questioning and clear explanations.
- Staff identify the needs of children who have SEN and/or disabilities promptly and provide carefully tailored activities to ensure that children's needs are met well.
- The partnership with parents is well developed. Parents feel that the staff communicate with them well. This has a positive impact on their children's learning. Parents consider that a nurturing attitude is a strength of the early years.
- Staff are vigilant in keeping children safe. The school meets all of the statutory welfare and safety requirements for the early years.

School details

Unique reference number

104812

Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10042457

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Johnson
Executive Headteacher	Patsy Wade
Telephone number	01744 678 570
Website	www.stjohnvianneyprimary.com
Email address	stjohnvianney@sthelens.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Children attend the Reception class full-time. Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant turbulence in staffing, including in the senior leadership team. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, an executive headteacher assumed the interim leadership of the school, part-time, in September 2017. The deputy headteacher, who was appointed in January 2016, took up the role of head of school at the same time. A number of staff, including the leader of the early years, are new to their post since the previous inspection. The chair and vice-chair of governors have been appointed to their roles since the previous inspection. Several staff have experienced lengthy periods of absence through ill health since the previous inspection.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club for its pupils.

- Pre-school provision, St John Vianney First Steps, is managed by the governing body. This flexible, part-time provision is available for children prior to entering the Reception class. It is funded separately from the school and formed part of this inspection.
- The school receives support from the executive headteacher's school, St Austin's Catholic Primary School. St John Vianney Catholic Primary School is a member of a local network of schools.
- 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 gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. Learning was observed in all classes and when pupils learned in small groups.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about it. They listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills. Pupils talked to inspectors about the books they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- The inspectors talked with pupils informally as they played at breaktimes, visited the dining hall at lunchtime and observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. They met formally with three groups of pupils, including two pupils who showed an inspector around the school.
- An inspector met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors.
- An inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- Inspectors spoke with middle and subject leaders and other members of the school's staff.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of 64 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 41 comments provided for inspectors. Inspectors also took account of 12 responses to the staff questionnaire, 52 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the school's most recent surveys of pupils' and parents' views.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including information about pupils' progress, school improvement plans, information about teachers' performance and external views of the school. They reviewed the contents of the school's website and scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding completed by school staff.

Inspection team

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