

St Gabriel's CofE Primary School

Ellis Ashton Street, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside L36 6BH

Inspection dates

11–12 December 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 2018, Year 6 pupils were not well prepared for the next stage of their education. Their progress was weak, and their attainment was low.
- Although pupils' progress is improving, it is not good in a range of subjects, including writing and mathematics, across the school.
- Teachers do not use the information from the new assessment system effectively to plan teaching that meets pupils' needs.
- Not enough children in the early years reach a good level of development by the time that they leave Reception because they do not make good progress from their starting points.
- Governors' expectations of what constitutes good progress for pupils are not high enough. They do not hold school leaders sufficiently to account for pupils' academic outcomes
- In some year groups, teachers do not plan lessons that interest pupils and keep them engaged in their work. As a result, they lose interest and waste learning time.
- Some teachers do not provide challenging work for the most able pupils. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards at the end of Year 6 is below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils remains variable across all year groups. Leaders do not use the pupil premium funding well enough to support the achievement of these pupils.
- The curriculum, other than in English and mathematics, does not enable pupils to develop their subject-specific skills and knowledge in subjects such as history and geography.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is double the national average.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has strengthened the quality of leadership in the school. She has put appropriate strategies in place to improve teaching and learning.
- Pupils have a more secure grasp of phonics due to improved teaching of this subject.
- Pupils are making good progress in reading in almost all year groups.
- Relationships are positive throughout the school. Pupils are polite and conduct themselves well. They are kept safe and are well cared for by staff.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, in order that different groups of pupils make the progress that they should in a range of subjects, including writing and mathematics, so that their attainment at least matches the national averages, by:
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations for pupils, especially the most able, so that all are challenged to achieve the standards of which they are capable
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan appropriate learning that meets the needs of pupils, especially the most able and disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - ensuring that pupils maintain their interest and concentration during lessons so that learning time is not lost with off-task behaviour
 - reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - reviewing the use of the pupil premium funding to promote the progress of disadvantaged pupils
 - raising governors' expectations of pupils' achievement and ensuring that they stringently hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes
 - reviewing the curriculum so that it includes enough time and opportunity for pupils to develop subject-specific knowledge and skills in subjects such as geography and history.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in early years, particularly in Reception, so that a greater proportion of children achieve a good level of development.

An external review of the school's governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The newly appointed headteacher, along with the new leadership team, has made a swift and convincing start to tackling the shortcomings in the school. For example, action to improve pupils' 'learning conversations' has led to pupils being able to talk confidently about the strategies that they use in mathematics. However, there is more to do to ensure that pupils benefit from consistently strong teaching and have the opportunity to make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Leaders are honest in their views about the school. The identified priorities for improvement are accurate and leaders' actions are focused on key weaknesses. For example, they have stabilised staffing and have set about improving teaching in English and mathematics. Leaders are seeking support where necessary; they are working closely with a local trust which is strengthening leaders' capacity to bring about improvements.
- The curriculum is enriched through real-life experiences, such as school trips and visitors to school, that stimulate and excite pupils. One group recently visited Chester to study the Romans, while other groups have visited a slavery museum, an art gallery and spent time in York learning about the Vikings.
- However, the curriculum, other than in English and mathematics, is not sufficiently balanced to provide enough time and opportunity for pupils to develop subject-specific knowledge and skills in other subjects such as geography and history.
- Leaders are well respected by staff and pupils. Staff are motivated and support recent improvements. In a period of instability for the school, staff have worked extremely hard and with dedication to ensure that pupils remain at the heart of the school. The very large majority of staff are proud to work at St Gabriel's.
- The pupil premium funding has not been used well enough to improve the academic outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. There are signs that some disadvantaged pupils currently at the school are making stronger gains in their learning than has been the case previously, but this is not consistent across different year groups or subjects. Over time, disadvantaged pupils have not fared well by the end of Year 6 when compared to other pupils nationally.
- The primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding is used well. Pupils say how much they enjoy sport and find lessons fun. Pupils recognise the value of physical activity as a part of being healthy.
- Leaders' systems to target additional support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and to monitor their achievement are in their infancy.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. This contributes to a calm and caring environment where pupils mix happily together. Pupils understand that 'some children struggle with their behaviour', but they say that teachers are always there to help. Pupils learn about the wider community, gaining an appreciation and understanding of respecting others from different cultures and different faiths.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not asked enough pertinent questions about pupils' achievement in the past. This is because their expectations of what pupils can and should achieve for their age and ability are not high enough. As a result, they do not hold leaders to account for the impact of their work on pupils' progress and attainment.
- More recently, governors have begun to ask deeper and sometimes challenging questions about some aspects of the school's work. Consequently, they are gaining a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The governing body has made sure that the primary PE and sport funding is spent effectively and that it makes a difference to pupils' personal development. However, they have been less effective in ensuring that pupil premium funding is being used to promote the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- The governing body is diligent in carrying out its responsibilities to safeguard pupils. There is a governor responsible for overseeing and monitoring safeguarding and welfare-related matters.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in school, as are the care and welfare of vulnerable pupils and families who benefit from additional support. There is a clear message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and procedures are fit for purpose.
- Effective safeguarding and child protection systems are in place and are understood by staff. Appropriate training for staff and governors is undertaken and up to date, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism and female genital mutilation.
- Pupils spoken to said that they feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe personally and online. Pupils feel confident that adults will help them if necessary. The majority of parents who spoke to inspectors and responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that the school keeps their children safe and well looked after

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders have worked hard to stabilise the school after the disruption of the last year and the effect that it has had on teaching and learning in school. Teaching is improving, which is helping some groups of pupils to make stronger progress than they have in the past. However, teaching in different classes and in different subjects is not consistently good enough to tackle the weaknesses that have emerged in pupils' learning over time.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils. As a result, the tasks that they provide do not offer pupils enough challenge. This is particularly true for the most able pupils. At times pupils find their work too easy. They either complete it

quickly or without needing to give it much thought. Consequently, pupils miss out on being stretched further or engaged fully in their learning.

- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan learning that builds on pupils' prior knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils' learning needs are not always met, especially those pupils who are disadvantaged or most able. This hinders their progress.
- A whole-school focus on developing pupils' language skills, together with increasingly effective teaching of basic skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling is beginning to improve pupils' writing. Teachers ensure that pupils learn to read and appreciate different genres of text and to write in different styles. Pupils develop an appreciation of the effect an author is trying to create through a choice of words or grammatical style, such as using short sentences to build up tension. This is contributing to the improvements in pupils' progress in writing, although too few are writing at greater depth.
- In mathematics, teachers are beginning to address previous gaps in learning through focused teaching. For example, pupils demonstrate clear mathematical thinking when solving addition problems. They explain their methods confidently, recognising which method is most efficient. Pupils' books typically confirm these improvements in progress over time. However, this is not embedded consistently.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge, particularly in terms of pupils using correct vocabulary for English and mathematics. Teachers are beginning to link subjects together so that pupils can use their previous knowledge more effectively. For example, some pupils were able to use the history and geography facts that they had learned previously to make their writing about the slave trade more accurate. However, teachers are less skilled in developing subject-specific skills so that pupils are able to achieve well across a broad curriculum.
- The quality of phonics teaching is improving. This is because teachers have benefited from good-quality staff training provided by the trust. Pupils persevere with difficult words and use the skills that they have learned effectively. Pupils are now showing a keen interest in reading for pleasure; they enjoy their class texts and they have more books to choose from. However, the proportion of children reaching the higher standard in reading remains below the national average.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There is great importance placed on pupils' personal development and welfare, which is central and very visible in school. It is guided by the school's Christian ethos and values. Staff and governors are passionate about their responsibility to ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment in which pupils can learn.
- Pupils talked to inspectors about how they enjoy carrying out roles of responsibilities in school, such as being a school councillor or being a play leader for other pupils at breaktimes.

- Pupils are polite and friendly. Relationships are positive between staff and pupils, as staff provide helpful role models.
- Many pupils who spoke to inspectors were confident that staff deal with incidents of bullying or racist remarks when they are reported to them. A few parents indicated that they felt the school had not communicated well enough with them about bullying incidents. Evidence gathered from the inspection found that the school keeps suitable records of such incidents.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although behaviour has improved significantly in recent times, it is not good. This is because there are still instances of off-task behaviour in activities. In some cases a lack of challenge causes pupils to lose interest and concentration. Learning time is then lost, which hampers pupils' progress.
- This is not the case in upper key stage 2, where there is a more productive, industrious atmosphere in classrooms. These pupils show a very positive attitude and a thirst to learn.
- Elsewhere in school, pupils conduct themselves very well. They are polite and well mannered, open doors for each other and adults and are keen to smile and engage with visitors.
- A small number of pupils have difficulties in managing their behaviour. They are well supported to ensure that their behaviour does not get in the way of their learning and does not distract others. There are still occasional incidents of pupils being excluded. However, the school's behaviour specialist and pastoral team work hard to ensure that these exclusions are increasingly rare.
- Pupils say that behaviour is improving. They have a clear idea of the behaviour expected of them because leaders and staff communicate, and uphold, higher expectations of how pupils should behave. The management of behaviour is informed by the values of 'respect' and 'tolerance', which pupils are regularly taught. Pupils' positive behaviour is rewarded accordingly. For example, pupils receive awards in the weekly assembly if they have 'lived' the 'Golden Promises' that have been devised by staff and children together.
- Attendance is improving but continues to be a priority for the school. The leadership and pastoral team work hard to support pupils and families who might be struggling. While there are positive signs that this work is beginning to have an impact on some families, too many pupils continue to be persistently absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The 2018 results show that pupils in key stage 2 made weak progress in writing and mathematics by the time that they left Year 6. Only one third of this group achieved the expected standard in the reading, writing and mathematics combined measure. As a result, pupils were not well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 was also below average.

- A legacy of weaker teaching has resulted in gaps in current pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly for the most able. However, leaders have worked with determination to address this. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is improving across the school. Evidence in pupils' books confirms that gaps in learning are being filled and pupils are making stronger progress than they have done in the past.
- Over time, pupils' progress in writing has been weaker than that in reading and mathematics. It has been in the bottom 20% when compared to all schools nationally. Leaders' work to improve this subject is bearing fruit. The work in current pupils' books shows improving progress in developing the structure of their writing. In Year 6, pupils are beginning to write longer pieces, practising and refining their work over time. Pupils in other year groups demonstrate a growing confidence with basic presentation and punctuation.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was below average in 2018. Decisive action by leaders has ensured that a uniform approach to teaching phonics is now in place. This has resulted in improving progress in Years 1 and 2.
- Older pupils typically enjoy greater success with reading. Progress in this subject has been strongest over time and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 is much closer to the national average. Pupils currently at the school are developing appropriate expression and fluency in reading. Older pupils, particularly, demonstrate positive attitudes to reading and are keen to read for pleasure.
- Pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics declined in 2018 for Year 6 pupils. Improved teaching is helping pupils to make up for lost ground and embed their grasp of basic skills.
- Very few Year 6 pupils left St Gabriel's working at greater depth or reaching the higher standards. This picture is reflected in the 2018 key stage 1 results. The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, currently attending school do not achieve as well as they should, given their abilities and higher starting points.
- School information shows that the progress of pupils with SEND is improving in some classes, but their progress is not consistently good.
- There are signs that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is improving. They are making similar progress to non-disadvantaged pupils in the school. However, by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, the gaps between disadvantaged pupils at St Gabriel's and other pupils nationally remains wide.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Early years provision requires improvement because teachers' expectations are not high enough. Children enter early years with skills and knowledge that are typically below what can be expected for their age. Not enough children achieve a good level of development by the time they leave Reception. This is because too few make good or better progress over time.
- Nursery and Reception classes are located separately. The consistency of teaching and

learning approaches across the Nursery and Reception classes vary too much and hinder a smooth transition between each year group.

- In both the Nursery and Reception classrooms, routines are well established to ensure that children behave well and tidy up in order to keep spaces clear and safe.
- Children's behaviour is good. They play and learn together well. However, children are not always as engaged in their learning in the outside environment.
- Adults in the Nursery class are actively involved in children's learning. At the time of the inspection, children were learning about Christmas. They were keen to create their own Christmas trees with the same number of baubles as the teacher's model. Children were helped to count carefully. When the children went off to consolidate their learning, they were observed continuing to develop their mathematical skills in other areas of the classroom.
- The early years leader knows the strengths and weaknesses in the early years provision. Leaders work with a local multi-academy trust to strengthen teaching and learning across the department.
- Staff have an appropriate understanding of children's development needs. However, assessment is not used effectively to move older children's learning forward. For example, children were seen practising their numbers to 20. However, it was evident that a few could already do this and were not moved on to a more challenging activity.
- Teachers and teaching assistants generally help children engage with their learning and develop their thinking. They do this by asking questions that prompt children to consider different choices and to speculate about different outcomes. However, questioning is not used effectively across the early years department.
- Adults are well trained and know about the procedures in place to keep children safe at school. Both indoor environments are well organised. However, the outside area for Reception children is not as well developed.

School details

Unique reference number	104452
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10082041

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Best
Headteacher	Amanda Bushell
Telephone number	0151 477 8250
Website	www.stgabrielshuyton.net
Email address	stgabriel@knowsley.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 February 2015

Information about this school

- St Gabriel's is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, supported by pupil premium, is double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is just under the national average.
- The school has experienced some turbulence in staffing since the previous inspection. The headteacher and a number of middle leaders are relatively new to post.
- Leadership is supported by the Rainbow Trust, a local multi-academy trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. They also looked at pupils' work in books, records of children's learning in the early years and other information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors met a group of pupils and talked informally with pupils around the school. They took into account 41 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, and spoke to a number of parents while at the school.
- Inspectors met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. They met with the leader of the local trust that the school works with, and they held discussions with staff in the school, including leaders responsible for the provision for pupils with SEND and staff responsible for overseeing pastoral care and safeguarding. Inspectors also met the leader for the early years, the phase leaders responsible for key stages 1 and 2, and English and mathematics leads.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documents, including information about pupils' attainment and progress, the school's reviews of its own performance and records of meetings of the governing body. They also examined safeguarding documentation and records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Moira Atkins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Joan Williamson

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