

St John's Catholic Primary School

Melbourne Street, Tiverton, Devon EX16 5LB

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2019

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Considerable changes in staff and weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation have meant senior leaders have struggled to bring about consistently good or better teaching.
- Improvements have been made, but significant weaknesses remain in teaching. Standards, although rising, are not doing so quickly enough.
- Teachers do not use assessment effectively. They do not consistently plan teaching which ensures that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are helped to reach the expected or the higher standard for their age.
- The teaching of reading is not sufficiently well planned. Pupils in both key stages 1 and 2 who need to catch up are not yet doing so quickly enough.
- Teachers do not develop pupils' writing well enough in subjects other than English. The most able pupils are not guided sufficiently in how to reach the higher standards in writing.
- Pupils, particularly those of middle ability, make inconsistent progress in acquiring problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- It has taken time for the school to establish the roles of middle leaders. Consequently, they have not yet brought about consistently good teaching in their subject.
- Leaders do not evaluate with sufficient clarity the progress of groups of pupils from their starting points. This hinders leaders in identifying those actions which are best supporting improving pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors share a realistic picture of what needs to be improved.
- Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Teaching both challenges and engages them.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make especially good progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and show pride in their work. They behave well and attend school regularly.
- The school's approach to keeping pupils safe is rigorous. Staff are vigilant for pupils' safety.
- Parents are highly complimentary about the school and the broad learning experiences their children have.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders’ checks on teaching result in swift improvement, particularly in securing consistently good teaching that strengthens pupils’ achievement
 - leaders sharpening their evaluations of pupils’ progress so that they hold a more precise picture of where improvements still need to be made
 - ensuring that middle leaders have the capacity and skills to bring about good teaching and achievement in their subject.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils, including those disadvantaged, make good progress by teachers:
 - using assessment information to match learning precisely to the needs of pupils
 - giving pupils guidance about what they need to include in their writing, so that more reach the higher standard
 - using and extending pupils’ writing skills more effectively across the range of subjects
 - building pupils’ reading skills progressively, so that those who need to catch up acquire the skills expected for their age
 - overcoming pupils’ misconceptions in solving mathematical problems so that more pupils, particularly those of middle ability, reach or exceed the expected standards.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, high levels of turnover of staff, difficulty in recruiting and weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation have prevented leaders from embedding improvements to the curriculum and to teaching. Consequently, despite frequent monitoring and some accurate identification of weaknesses, leaders have not developed consistently good teaching.
- The development of the role of middle leaders has also been constrained by changes of staff over the past two years. The leader for English has recently taken up her role and has strengthened the teaching of writing, which is now more effective than at the previous inspection. She has, however, had insufficient time to improve the teaching of reading beyond implementing further support for those who need to catch up. This support is not yet fully impacting on raising standards. The post of leader for mathematics has changed several times since the previous inspection. The new learning programme for mathematics has strengthened teaching and pupils' achievement but is not yet taught consistently well.
- Leaders analyse pupils' progress and standards. However, they do not sufficiently draw out from their analysis the significance of erratic progress to the overall achievement of different groups of pupils. This inhibits their ability to identify whether actions in the school improvement plan are leading to rates of progress which will raise standards.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have strengthened their focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Funding is increasingly used well to provide additional programmes to help pupils catch up in their learning in reading and mathematics. However, not all disadvantaged pupils are yet achieving as well as they could. The school has not fully achieved its intention of ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- The leader with responsibility for pupils with SEND is rigorous in tracking pupils' progress. She works closely with teachers to ensure that the provision in class is pitched at the right level for the pupils. Parents value the opportunities they are given to engage with school about their children's needs. Close working between home and school and skilled staff support in class ensure that pupils with SEND make good progress.
- Leaders make sure that pupils have full access to a wide and interesting curriculum. Leaders have strengthened the curriculum for mathematics and writing, and this is supporting some improvements to teaching and learning. For example, there is now increased emphasis on problem-solving in mathematics. The curriculum for science has been developed well since the previous inspection and is having a positive effect on pupils' achievement.
- The curriculum, incorporating the school's Catholic foundation and values, supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils say that they are taught respect for others and the world around them. They have strong opinions, for instance about the threat to the oceans from the use of plastics.
- Parents are positive about the school. A relatively low number of them responded to

the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. However, all those who did so and those who spoke to an inspector would recommend the school. They particularly commend the approachability of leaders and staff, noting how they always listen and resolve any small concerns that parents may have.

- The school makes effective use of the additional sports premium funding. The funding is used well to ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of activities, such as yoga and hockey. Leaders closely track the number of pupils who take part in competitive sport and are able to show a high level of participation in this aspect of physical education.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school by Plymouth CAST has now sharpened its oversight of the school. Together with the local governing body, it has a very realistic understanding of the importance of maintaining the pace of improvement. Recent increased support from the trust has supported the headteacher in making necessary changes.
- The local governing body and the trust receive comprehensive reports from the headteacher to help them to monitor the priorities for the school's improvement. However, while a wealth of assessment information is given to governors, it is insufficiently sharp to help them in understanding whether specific groups of pupils are making the progress that they should.
- Governors track the elements of the school improvement plan through visits of their own. The shared vision and values for the school and increasingly effective action taken by the trust, the local governing body and school leaders underpin the school's capacity to further improve.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher and governors have ensured that procedures and policies are robust and effective in keeping pupils safe from harm. Leaders and staff have regular training in line with their roles. The headteacher keeps staff up to date through weekly reminders about procedures and the needs of individual pupils. Staff use this information well to maintain vigilance and report any concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders are confident to pass on concerns to external agencies to ensure that families are supported. Their records of concerns and actions are meticulously maintained.
- The school ensures that all adults who work with pupils are safe to do so. Records of checks are maintained well. Staff are scrupulous in checking the identity of all visitors to the school, and pupils know how to identify whether adults in school have been checked.
- Governors support leaders in maintaining the quality of the school's work on safeguarding. They carry out specific checks on health and safety and regularly discuss safeguarding with leaders.

- Parents are highly positive about the ways in which the school supports their children's well-being and safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching lacks consistency across year groups and subjects, and is not securing good achievement by all pupils. New programmes for teaching are still being embedded and are not yet used to take account sharply of the next steps in learning for different groups of pupils.
- Teachers assess pupils' work accurately, but do not use the information about what pupils know and can do when planning their teaching. When reviewing pupils' work, they do not identify when gaps in pupils' learning are hindering their progress towards the expected or higher standards. Consequently, they do not always challenge pupils sufficiently or give them the help they need.
- In mathematics, some pupils of middle ability struggle to apply their strong calculation skills to solve problems, reason or explain their thinking clearly. Teachers are not developing these pupils' skills sufficiently well to enable them to tackle increasingly difficult work in this aspect of mathematics across key stage 2. Consequently, pupils' progress is erratic across the key stage.
- There is inconsistency in the teaching of reading. In key stage 1, teachers do not identify and overcome the barriers to pupils' reading fluency. As a result, pupils who need to catch up upon entry to the key stage, some of whom are disadvantaged, do not do so. Across key stage 2, teachers do not develop pupils' skills of comprehension sufficiently well for pupils to fully develop their ability to read with understanding.
- Teachers do not challenge the most able pupils' accuracy in their writing. Teachers do not guide pupils sufficiently in how to develop their ideas. Consequently, pupils who are capable of writing at the higher standard do not write with sufficient consistency to achieve this. Pupils across the range of ability are not taught how to apply their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Teachers are now more securely developing pupils' stamina in writing and teaching them how to write for different purposes, for example letters and stories. The basics of grammar are being taught more consistently than at the time of the previous inspection. This is supporting pupils to catch up to and sustain their writing at the expected standard for their age. Pupils' handwriting is developed well, and pupils consequently present their work neatly.
- Teachers now develop learning opportunities to extend pupils' investigative skills in mathematics. The most able pupils, in particular, respond well and forge ahead in their learning. For example, a Year 4 and 5 mixed group of pupils explored a number pattern with dominoes. The teacher was quick to identify that the most able pupils needed more challenge. She prompted pupils with sufficient cues to move them onto the next step in their thinking.
- The teaching of phonics in Year 1 is effective for most pupils, and they acquire knowledge of the expected range of sounds. The teacher puts the words in context so that pupils recognise the links between phonic patterns in words. She challenges them to apply their simple patterns in words of increasing difficulty. For example, pupils

learning how to write 'bone' linked the phonic pattern with others and were able to write 'explode'.

- Teachers encourage pupils to read frequently and to widen their reading using different types of books. The most able pupils across key stage 2 read challenging books and explain their choices well.
- Teachers adapt learning well to enable pupils with SEND to be included in class teaching. Pupils are well supported by skilled teaching assistants who explain the learning clearly. The school is sharpening its use of additional teaching in mathematics and reading to help disadvantaged pupils, in particular, to catch up in their learning.
- The teaching of science is more effective now than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils learn the expected knowledge for their age. They are highly motivated, and some say that science is their favourite subject. They particularly relish the increased opportunities to carry out experiments and acquire good skills of scientific enquiry.
- Pupils are attentive to their teachers in class and try hard. They practise their learning frequently and do so enthusiastically. Time is well used in class.
- Pupils' good attitudes to learning and their diligence aid future learning. However, too few move on to secondary school having reached the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils talk about the 'school family' and how it watches over them to keep them safe.
- Pupils are taught well about how to keep themselves safe. Teachers use the school's personal and social development programme to ensure that pupils are well prepared for growing up. During the inspection, older pupils contributed sensibly in a lesson on drugs education. Pupils know how to use the internet safely.
- Relationships in school are good. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and they know how to report any concerns through the class 'worry boxes', which are checked frequently.
- The school encourages pupils' resilience. Pupils say they are given exciting experiences on their residential visits which help them to 'face their fears'. The school has additional resources and programmes for pupils who need additional support to boost their confidence in learning.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are proud of their work and know what makes it good. Pupils who met with an inspector were confident to explain how examples that they had chosen themselves represented their learning at its best.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are attentive in class and organise themselves

well. They cooperate with their classmates in their learning, and disruption in lessons is very rare.

- Pupils' behaviour is good at lunchtime. Lunchtime staff promote positive behaviour by nominating pupils for the 'golden table'. Pupils who gain a place at the table have lunch with a senior leader and have additional treats as a reward for their especially good behaviour.
- Pupils play together energetically in the playground and move in and around school sensibly. They understand the school rules and are positive about the good behaviour of others. They value the points they can gain for good behaviour and learning.
- Leaders oversee the attendance of pupils vigilantly. As a result, pupils attend well. If pupils have repeated absence, the school takes a rigorous approach to working with families and other professionals to secure pupils' safety and attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils make inconsistent progress over key stage 1 and 2. Despite standards at the end of 2018 showing an improvement, they remain too low. Pupils currently in school have a legacy of gaps in their knowledge and understanding which restrict their achievement.
- The most able pupils do not achieve as well as they could in writing, which varies in quality. They do not always fully extend their ideas in different types of writing. Pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation skills lack the accuracy needed to demonstrate writing at the higher standard.
- The progress of middle-ability pupils in mathematics requires improvement, particularly across key stage 2. Their work shows that, while they have good arithmetical skills, they struggle with the more challenging aspects of problem-solving and reasoning.
- Across key stage 1, those pupils who did not reach the early learning goal in reading in the Reception class do not catch up quickly enough. Most pupils currently in Year 1 acquire phonic skills well. However, across key stage 1 there remains a group of pupils, some of whom are disadvantaged, who lack basic fluency in reading. Additional learning programmes are hastening their progress, but pupils are not yet attaining the expected standard for their age.
- In key stage 2, the progress of pupils of middle ability is hindered because they are not developing the skills to infer and deduce the meaning of what they read. However, pupils, especially those most able, are avid readers. They select books which broaden their reading and read frequently.
- The most able pupils, including some who are disadvantaged, now make strong progress in mathematics. They respond well to opportunities to reason and explain their mathematical thinking. They apply efficient methods of calculation swiftly to solve problems and work systematically to explain the processes they have used.
- Most pupils now have increased stamina in writing. A stronger grasp of the basics of grammar, punctuation and spelling is supporting those pupils who are striving towards the expected standard for their age.
- Pupils with SEND make consistently good progress, particularly in reading, writing and

mathematics. Exposure to work at an age-appropriate level is hastening their progress, in some cases, towards the expected level for their age.

- Pupils are acquiring the knowledge of scientific principles well. They can carry out experiments and record their findings and conclusions accurately.

Early years provision

Good

- Good leadership and consistently effective teaching in the early years ensure that children make good progress. The leader is knowledgeable about good practice in early years. Through good staff development, she has brought the two classes together to give children a very good start to their education. As a result, most are well prepared for Year 1.
- The leader analyses assessment sharply in order to strengthen standards in the setting. She identifies where teaching needs to be adjusted in order to promote children's progress. For example, last year it was evident that the standards that boys were reaching in writing were lower than those of girls. Through adjustments to the curriculum, she has ensured that this year the achievement of boys and girls is equally strong.
- The teaching of mathematics, reading and writing is effective. Even though some children start school with weaker development in these aspects of the curriculum, they quickly catch up. While the attainment of children at the end of the Reception year last year was in line with the national average, there are currently some weaknesses in reading for a minority of the children.
- Across the Nursery and Reception classes, teachers plan activities which challenge children's thinking. The most able children in both classes make particularly strong progress. Children in the Nursery class are able to work independently to collect numbers of objects and count them reliably. In the Reception class, teachers set no limit on the numbers that children explore and, consequently, the most able are aware of numbers larger than 100. Children sustain their interest in their learning and cooperate with each other well.
- The teaching of phonic skills is mostly effective and children, including those who are disadvantaged, apply their knowledge of sounds in their early reading and writing.
- Pupils with SEND are well included in the setting and make good progress. Their parents are particularly positive about the support for their children's well-being. Relationships are good, and all children behave well.
- Teachers plan interesting learning across the curriculum. For instance, as part of their topic on growth they met both babies and young goats to learn about how they change over time. The recently developed outside learning space extends children's opportunities to explore and to develop their physical skills.
- Parents are welcomed in the setting and join in supporting learning, for example when children explore the woodland area.
- The leader for the early years has ensured that the standards for ensuring children's welfare in the early years setting are met and, in some cases, exceeded. As a result, the setting is a very safe place for children to learn.

School details

Unique reference number	140762
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10088331

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Lord John Burnett
Headteacher	Caroline James
Telephone number	0188 425 3630
Website	www.stjohnstiverton.co.uk
Email address	sbm@stjohnstiverton.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 March 2017

Information about this school

- St John’s Catholic Primary School is slightly smaller than the average primary school. It is part of the Plymouth CAST.
- Children join the school in the Nursery class from two years old. The Nursery class is known as St John’s Pre-school. They continue across the school in single-age classes.
- The headteacher was the interim headteacher at the time of the previous inspection. She has recently been appointed to the substantive role of headteacher.
- The school has continued to experience turbulence in staffing since 2017. Middle-leadership responsibilities have changed and are still undergoing further change.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the number of pupils with English as an additional language is increasing.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEND is above the national average, as is the

proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan.

- The proportion of pupils supported through pupil premium funding is average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons across the school. Some observations were undertaken with the headteacher. Meetings were held with the leader for early years and the leader with responsibility for pupils with SEND. An inspector also met with the leader for English and the leader for mathematics.
- Inspectors reviewed samples of pupils' work in English, mathematics and science. They discussed pupils' reading with them and their progress in science. An inspector read with a small group of pupils from key stage 1.
- A meeting was held with a small group of governors. An inspector also met with a representative of the multi-academy trust. A telephone conversation was held with the director of education and standards for the trust.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's own self-evaluation and the school's plans for improvement. They also took account of information that the school holds on pupils' current standards and progress.
- Inspectors took account of the school's approach to safeguarding. They reviewed policies and procedures and spoke to a number of members of staff to discuss their training.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils during their lunchtimes and in class. They also held a more formal discussion to ascertain pupils' views of the school. The 35 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey were also considered.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. They also considered 17 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and one email from a parent. The opinions of staff were taken account of through 24 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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