

Inspection of a good school: Sylvester Primary Academy

St John's Road, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside L36 0UX

Inspection dates:

8–9 October 2019

Outcome

Sylvester Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone within the community works together to make Sylvester Academy a happy place for pupils to be. Pupils told me they are proud of their school. From the time they arrive each morning, pupils know that they will be safe and well cared for.

Pupils behave well. 'Playground pals' and 'anti-bullying ambassadors' encourage positive behaviour around the school. Pupils told me that although there is sometimes name-calling, bullying is rare. Staff deal with any incidents well.

Staff and pupils told me that school leaders are caring. They said that leaders are supportive in matters relating to their mental and physical health.

Staff have high expectations of the pupils. When I visited lessons, I saw pupils working hard, and when asked to work with each other, they cooperated well. Pupils enjoy reading. This supports their learning across a wide range of other subjects.

History, science and physical education are particular strengths. Pupils told me that they enjoy learning in these subjects. Pupils also said that they like the many opportunities that they have to attend after-school clubs. These clubs include a wide range of sports. Pupils also have many opportunities to take part in musical activities.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The early years is well led. Leaders have carefully designed the early years curriculum. It prioritises the development of early reading and mathematical knowledge. Staff provide lots of fun learning experiences for the children inside the classroom and in the outdoor area. Adults use questioning well to check children's understanding. Teachers' skilful use of resources encourages children to learn new words and begin to read, for example through the use of the 'reading and writing hut'. Children achieve well and are ready for Year 1.

Leaders have created a well-designed curriculum. This helps pupils achieve well in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics, by the end of key stage 2. Teachers ensure that effective support is provided for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to help learn as well as their classmates.

Leaders have raised the profile of reading. Staff are skilled at teaching phonics and reading. Adults know the letter sounds that children need to know by the end of the year. They make sure that this happens, providing support for those pupils who need to catch up. Children take home a range of books that match the sounds they have been learning in class.

As pupils move through the school, they become confident and fluent readers. Teachers frequently model reading to their classes. There are regular opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their reading. Pupils told me that they enjoy reading.

The mathematics curriculum sets out precisely what pupils should learn and when. It is a strength of the school. Well trained and skilful teachers help pupils to develop strong mathematical knowledge and understanding. Pupils know their multiplication tables. They use this knowledge to tackle challenging mathematical problems. Pupils do well in the end of key stage 2 mathematics tests.

In history, science and music, learning is carefully planned to build on what pupils already know. Teachers introduce and explain new ideas well. They check on pupils' work so that pupils can learn from their mistakes. As a result, pupils build knowledge and skills in these subjects.

There are precise curriculum plans for geography and art. However, some teachers do not systematically follow these plans. While pupils enjoy learning these subjects, they do not build up their knowledge over time. Leaders are well on their way to making sure pupils know and remember more in these subjects.

Personal development is a strength of the school. The curriculum is enriched by many opportunities for pupils to learn about how to look after themselves. Pupils spoke with confidence about how their teachers care for their mental health. They also told me about the importance of eating the right foods. Pupils appreciate and use the 'well-being corner' in the library and the worry boxes in classrooms.

Regular trips, visits and visitors to the school help pupils to gain a wider understanding of the world. They develop an understanding of different faiths and cultures within and beyond their local community. Pupils understand that everyone is different. They are sensitive to the needs of others.

Leaders ensure that all staff work as a team. They have prioritised staff workload and well-being. Leaders have a positive relationship with the Wade Deacon Trust. Subject leaders benefit from the training provided by the Trust. This helps to develop teachers' subject knowledge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The leadership team have made safeguarding a high priority. They are determined to keep staff and pupils safe. Leaders ensure that all appropriate checks are made to ensure the suitability of adults working in school. They keep records that are fit for purpose. Well-trained staff and governors are vigilant in identifying safeguarding concerns and take appropriate actions to help keep pupils safe. Leaders have good relationships with families and the community. They share information with appropriate authorities.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Most pupils, including those who with SEND, achieve well in most subjects, particularly history and mathematics. The teachers are skilled and have the knowledge to teach most areas of the curriculum. The school leaders need to ensure that the curriculum plans for subjects, including geography and art, are followed precisely by all teachers. Leaders need to check the quality of pupils' knowledge in these subjects and how they build this over a period of time.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Sylvester Primary School, as good in October 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143878
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10110972
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair/Chair of trust/Chair of governing body	Brian O'Hare
Principal	Ruth Harrison
Website	www.sylvesterprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The academy, formerly Sylvester Primary School, converted in January 2017. It joined The Wade Deacon Trust.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the principal, vice-principal and members of the senior leadership team. We met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. We also met with a representative from the Trust.
- I looked in detail at reading, mathematics and history. This involved a meeting with each subject leader, visits to lessons, speaking with pupils and teachers, and looking at the work in pupils' books.
- To inspect safeguarding I looked at safeguarding and child protection policies. We reviewed the school's record of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. We met with the designated safeguarding leader. We spoke to staff and pupils about keeping safe.
- I listened to pupils read, scrutinised their work and talked with them at breaktimes. I also met with groups of pupils to listen to their views. I considered the 19 responses

from staff and the 25 responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaires.

- I spoke to some parents as they arrived with their children at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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