

Inspection of a good school: St Christopher's Catholic Primary School

Tarbock Road, Speke, Liverpool, Merseyside L24 0SN

Inspection dates:

27–28 November 2019

Outcome

St Christopher's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school provides a happy, warm and welcoming environment for all pupils and their families. Leaders and staff support pupils' well-being effectively. However, their expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not consistently high enough, particularly in writing and science.

Leaders and staff encourage pupils to become independent and resilient learners. Pupils are friendly and kind towards each other. At breaktimes, pupils enjoy playing games, exploring the school's forest area and joining in fun fitness activities. Pupils told me that they are not aware of any bullying. If there is inappropriate behaviour, pupils are confident that teachers will 'sort out anything that goes wrong'.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that helps pupils learn in a fun way. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' personal skills. Pupils study a wide range of topics across the curriculum. They enjoy trips that support their learning, such as to museums and the local library. Pupils take part in a wide range of clubs at the end of the school day, especially sports and singing.

Pupils enjoy coming to the school. They feel cared for and safe. Leaders and staff have built good relationships with parents and carers.

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

The curriculum does not ensure that pupils achieve well in all subjects. In some areas of the curriculum, such as history, staff plan and sequence pupils' learning well. Leaders have taken account of the local area and what is important for pupils to learn. They have identified the specific knowledge they want pupils to acquire. For example, the history curriculum helps pupils understand the sequence of events over a period of time. Pupils understand that lessons can be learned from what has happened in the past. As part of

their work on the Great Fire of London, pupils identified how and why the fire started. They used this knowledge to think about how we build houses today. Leaders make regular checks to ensure that the history curriculum is being delivered effectively. The way leaders plan, sequence and monitor other subjects, including science, is not as successful. As a result, pupils do not build knowledge in these subjects so that they know more and remember more.

The curriculum plans for writing do not enable pupils to develop their knowledge of spelling, grammar and punctuation as they move through the school. Teachers do not plan opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects. As a result, by the end of key stage 2 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing is too low.

Leaders have carefully designed the early years curriculum. Staff provide lots of fun learning experiences that cover all areas of learning inside the classroom and outdoors. As they learn and play, children have many opportunities to develop their reading and mathematical skills.

Leaders have made reading the key priority. In the early years, children have many opportunities to develop and extend their vocabulary. Adults regularly check children's understanding and provide clear explanations to improve their learning. There are detailed plans in place for the teaching of phonics. However, some staff lack the knowledge and skills to support pupils in developing phonics and early reading skills. This results in some pupils not doing as well as they could in reading by the end of key stage 1.

At key stage 2, teachers use good-quality texts in daily reading lessons. Pupils listen intently to stories and poems that adults read to them. Pupils enjoy reading books that support their learning across a range of curriculum subjects. They are also becoming more confident in undertaking comprehension tasks. As a result, pupils' achievement in reading at the end of key stage 2 is improving.

Teachers understand how to adapt their plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils gain confidence and achieve well.

Pupils understand why it is important to show respect for others. They learn about a range of cultures, traditions and communities. Pupils take on a number of roles, such as 'play leaders' and 'mini police officers'. This helps them to have a positive understanding of the world and life in modern Britain. Pupils are keen to learn, and their behaviour supports learning.

The pastoral team supports staff, pupils and their families well. They are vigilant in contacting pupils should they not arrive at the school on time. Several pupils told me how the 'rainbow club' helps them if they feel upset.

Staff appreciate the efforts by the leadership team to consider their work-life balance. Staff morale is positive. Staff feel that leaders are supportive. Leaders are committed to providing the right training for staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant and follow up any safeguarding concerns. Leaders respond promptly to information they receive from staff. The school keeps detailed and well-organised records. All staff have completed the required safeguarding training. They understand and follow the school's policies and procedures. All staff have been appropriately vetted before taking up their post in the school. Leaders engage with a range of external agencies to support families who are at risk or in need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They recognise risks, especially those associated with being online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have recently developed the curriculum to improve early reading. The plan for learning phonics is systematic and there is clarity as to how pupils develop early reading. However, some staff lack the knowledge to implement the phonics programme and to help pupils develop their early reading skills. As a result, the curriculum is not delivered effectively, and pupils are falling behind in their reading. Leaders need to make sure that all pupils secure their phonic knowledge as soon as possible. Leaders must ensure that all staff who are supporting pupils in early reading are effectively trained. Leaders should check the impact of this training on how well all pupils are learning to read with accuracy, fluency and understanding.
- The writing curriculum is not sufficiently planned and sequenced to ensure that pupils build their knowledge of punctuation, spelling and grammar. When asked to write, pupils lack confidence and are making repeated errors. As a result, pupils do not achieve well enough in writing. Leaders should ensure that pupils are provided with a more structured curriculum to strengthen pupils' knowledge of spelling, grammar and punctuation. In addition, leaders need to ensure that pupils can apply their writing knowledge in all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders have developed some effective plans for the different areas of the curriculum. In some areas of the curriculum, such as history and art and design, checks carried out show that the plans are working well. However, this is not the case for other subjects, including science. This means that pupils do not achieve as well in these subjects. The school leaders need to ensure that all curriculum plans 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 St Christopher's Catholic Primary School to be good on 10 June 2015.

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	133615
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10087741
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	375
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rita Byrne
Headteacher	Collette Denby
Website	http://www.stchristophersprimary.com
Date of previous inspection	10 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school is a Roman Catholic school. The most recent section 48 inspection was in March 2018.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, I met with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- I held meetings with teachers, support staff and subject leaders. I met with five members of the governing body and held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- I visited lessons in each key stage. I spoke to pupils from each key stage and viewed examples of their work. I spoke to pupils about behaviour and expectations in the school and observed behaviour around the school and in lessons.
- I observed two teachers support Year 2 pupils with their reading.
- I reviewed the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and information on the school's website. I examined records in relation to safeguarding.
- I considered the 22 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 18

free-text responses. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I considered the 18 responses to the staff online questionnaire.

- As part of this inspection, I looked carefully at phonics and reading in all classes. I also focused on writing and history. During these activities, I met with subject leaders and visited lessons. I also spoke with teachers and pupils. I looked at examples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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