

Inspection of St Columba's Catholic Primary School

Hillside Road, Huyton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Merseyside L36 8BL

Inspection dates: 3–4 March 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are at the heart of everything that the school does. They are happy and enjoy learning in a school where they feel safe and secure. Parents and carers who spoke with us agreed with this view. The relationships between adults and pupils are supportive and caring.

Pupils live up to the high expectations that teachers have of them. They want pupils to achieve well. The school has improved rapidly since the last inspection. Pupils now benefit from an ambitious curriculum which is accessible to all, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils have wonderful opportunities to develop personally. Staff go the extra mile to help pupils develop their talents and interests. Pupils contribute to their community and to the life of the church. Pupils who spoke with us said that they believe that there is no limit to what they are capable of achieving.

Pupils behave well. They move around the school in an orderly manner. Pupils respect their teachers. They listen carefully to instructions and get on with their work. Bullying is not tolerated at St Columba's. Pupils are confident that it is rare. They know that if it did happen, their teachers would put a stop to it straight away.

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

Since the school was last inspected, leaders have made improvements to the curriculum. This curriculum is broad and balanced, including in the early years. Leaders have identified the key knowledge and skills in each subject they want pupils to acquire by the end of each year. Subject leaders have set out these expectations in clear curriculum plans for teachers to follow.

Teachers plan lessons that help pupils to know more and remember more. Pupils can remember what they had learned in previous lessons, in almost all subjects. However, some pupils could not recall previous learning in science and geography.

Leaders have provided additional training for staff in the teaching of phonics. This has improved the phonics curriculum. Phonics is taught right from the start. Staff take swift action to support pupils who are falling behind. In 2019, significant cohort issues adversely affected the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Inspection evidence shows that current pupils are achieving well in phonics. This includes pupils with SEND. However, occasionally, adults do not pronounce letter sounds clearly when they are teaching phonics. When this happens, it hampers pupils' learning.

Pupils across the school develop a love of reading. Teachers choose high-quality texts for pupils to read in class. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite

books and authors. Pupils achieve well in reading at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Pupils, including those in the early years, said that learning in mathematics is 'fun'. They could explain what they had been learning. Leaders make sure that teachers have strong subject knowledge in mathematics. Teachers use this knowledge to plan lessons that build up pupils' knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils achieve well in mathematics.

The curriculum in science meets the expectations of the national curriculum. Pupils particularly enjoy the practical activities that their teachers sometimes provide. They say that these activities help them to remember their learning. However, teachers do not always implement the science curriculum in a way that engages pupils. This is also the case for the geography curriculum. When this happens, pupils find it harder to remember what they have learned.

Pupils enjoy physical education (PE). They develop confidence in their movements and use the space safely. Pupils can explain how their skills have developed and improved over time. Teachers adapt lessons so that all pupils can participate and succeed in PE.

Pupils are keen to learn and this is reflected in their behaviour in lessons. They understand the importance of attending school on a regular basis.

Children thrive in the early years. They achieve well. Well-trained staff take every opportunity to develop and extend children's language skills. For example, staff read stories to children that introduce them to plenty of new words. Children learn to count accurately and to recognise shapes. Most children are well prepared for Year 1.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND receive effective and timely support. This enables them to take part in all aspects of the curriculum.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils are ambitious and have high aspirations for the future. They excel in sport and music. Pupils develop strong relationships with local police and contribute to the community. British values are threaded through all aspects of the school's work. Pupils are extremely well prepared for life outside school in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors understand the risks and dangers that pupils face outside school. They make sure that the curriculum teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online, and who to speak to if they are worried.

Leaders have made sure that all staff have a range of safeguarding training. This helps staff to be vigilant for signs of harm. There are clear procedures for staff to report any concerns. Staff understand and use these procedures well. Pupils and families facing challenging circumstances receive good levels of support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, the activities that teachers provide in geography or science are not planned well enough to help pupils retain their knowledge over time. When this happens, some pupils struggle to remember their earlier learning in these subjects. Leaders now need to ensure that teaching in these subjects is more carefully designed so that pupils across the school build and retain knowledge securely.
- Leaders have improved teachers' and staff members' subject knowledge in phonics. Almost all staff use this strong subject knowledge consistently. However, occasionally some staff still pronounce letter sounds incorrectly when they are teaching phonics. When this happens, it hampers pupils' own ability to segment and blend the sounds in words. Leaders now need to ensure that these remaining inconsistencies are eliminated, so that all pupils benefit from good phonics teaching.

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 the school and 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	104480
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10135048
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	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Fr Chris McCoy
Headteacher	Margaret Evans
Website	stcolumbasknowsley.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2019. A new chair has been appointed to the governing body since the last inspection.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection of religious education took place in June 2019.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with members of the governing body, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff. We also took account of the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff online survey.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives from the local authority and from the local schools consortium.
- We spoke with pupils in meetings and during lessons. We also spoke with them at break and at lunchtime. We spoke with some parents at the end of the school day. We took account of the 13 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

- We checked on safeguarding procedures and leaders' safeguarding and behaviour records. We observed pupils' behaviour around school and considered leaders' attendance information.
- We considered a range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, plans for improvement and reports from the school improvement adviser.
- We considered the following subjects in-depth as part of the inspection: reading, mathematics, science and PE. Inspection activity in these subjects included: evaluation of leaders' curriculum planning; visits to lessons; scrutiny of pupils' work; listening to pupils read; discussions with subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants and discussions with pupils about their learning in these subjects.
- In addition to subject-focused activity, we checked on the quality of provision in the early years and the implementation of the wider curriculum across the whole school.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Moira Atkins

Ofsted Inspector

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