

Inspection of St Ambrose Catholic Primary School

Alderfield Drive, Speke, Liverpool, Merseyside L24 7SF

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 May 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils behave well. Pupils now understand that people are different to themselves but no less valued. A typical pupil comment was, 'We are against racism, sexism and prejudice.' St Ambrose has been transformed by the current leaders, governors and staff over the past three years.

Parents and carers appreciate how leaders welcome them and their children at the school gates daily. Pupils and their families have good relationships with staff. Pupils are happy. They want to attend school and feel safe doing so. Pupils behave positively. Bullying is rare and staff deal well with any issues that arise.

Leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils' education at the school. Pupils try their best to meet these expectations. Children in the early years enjoy a strong start to their schooling because staff plan and organise their curriculum skilfully. That said, pupils in key stages 1 and 2 do not build their knowledge of some important subject content. This is because leaders have not thought carefully enough about how to plan learning in some subjects.

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

Leaders and staff give pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), a much-improved education. In many subjects, staff training has led to improvements in curriculum planning, teaching and assessment. Pupils' achievement is much stronger than it has been in the past. This is also true for children in the early years.

Pupils gain a strong understanding of mathematics, such as multiplying and dividing numbers. They relish the knowledge and skills that they build during their physical education activities. However, in some curriculum subjects, leaders have not fully considered the precise knowledge that pupils should learn. Teachers use assessment well to adapt their teaching. That said, leaders have not ensured that teachers use the most suitable activities to deliver some of the planned curriculum. This stops pupils from building on what they already know. This means that some pupils do not learn as much as they should.

Teachers and teaching assistants are highly trained to teach pupils to read. Staff give extra help to those pupils who struggle to say the sounds that letters make. In Nursery, staff teach children to listen and talk, and to learn stories, rhymes and poems. Pupils throughout the school develop their phonics knowledge effectively. They read fluently. Pupils enjoy the many interesting, and challenging, books that are in the classrooms and the attractive school library.

Pupils are keen to learn. Classrooms are calm, happy places for all pupils, including those with SEND, to learn. Almost all pupils attend school regularly and arrive at lessons punctually.

Leaders and staff provide pupils with many opportunities to improve their personal development. For instance, in Nursery, children learn to understand the roles of people who help us, such as refuse collectors, doctors and police officers. Pupils in key stage 2, for example, learn of the challenges of global warming and the importance of fair trade. Staff teach pupils to respect the characteristics, lives and views of people who are different to themselves. This means that pupils then deliberately include other pupils in their play, talk and friendships.

Leaders have brought about positive change to many aspects of the school, while remaining mindful of staff's workload and well-being. Leaders have succeeded in rooting out inadequate practice. They have raised the quality of all leaders' and staff's work and improved pupils' education to a reasonable level. All leaders understand what further work is required for them to improve the quality of the curriculum even more.

Leaders are ably supported by a new governing body, who are unafraid of challenging leaders to ensure that the school gets better.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are fully trained to understand the issues that can affect the lives of pupils and their families. They keep a close check on pupils to ensure that they are safe and receive the individual help that they need. Leaders make certain that all staff carefully keep confidential records of any concerns and link fully with other agencies where needed. Leaders make sure that issues such as road safety and online safety are a regular focus in the curriculum and in extra activities, and that they are included in information shared with parents.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' plans for some of the curriculum do not contain enough precise information about the knowledge that pupils will be taught. This weakness holds back pupils' understanding in some subjects. Leaders should make certain that the curriculum in all subjects clearly identifies the small building blocks of knowledge that pupils will be taught.
- Some of the activities used by teachers in lessons do not match the intentions for pupils' learning. This means that some tasks completed by pupils do not build the knowledge they need to move on in their learning. Leaders should ensure that all planned teaching activities are well matched to developing the knowledge and skills that pupils need to acquire.

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	104672
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10184630
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	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julie Rourke
Executive Headteacher	Matthew White
Website	www.stambroseprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 to 11 February 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Several leaders, governors and staff, including the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), are new to the school since the last section 5 inspection.
- St Ambrose is a Catholic school. The previous section 48 inspection took place in June 2019.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020–21 COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- Inspectors spoke with several pupils about their education at the school and to hear their views about equality, behaviour and safety. Inspectors also spoke with pupils around the school and in playgrounds.
- Inspectors spoke with several parents, including representatives from the parent council. Inspectors reviewed parental comments received by email and telephone and the 25 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of staff, including non-teaching staff, to discuss the improvement of the school and about safeguarding. They also considered the responses from 15 school staff to Ofsted’s survey.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, including the early years leader and with the SENCo, about their work at the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the chair and vice-chair of the school governing body. They also met with representatives of the local authority and of the Liverpool Archdiocese.
- Inspectors looked closely at reading, mathematics, physical education, history and geography. This included speaking with subject leaders, reviewing curriculum documents, observing some teaching, reviewing examples of pupils’ work and speaking with some pupils about their learning. Inspectors also considered evidence of pupils’ writing in the curriculum for English.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Adam Sproston

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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