

St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School

Webster Street, Litherland, Liverpool, Merseyside, L21 8JH

Inspection dates

8–9 June 2017

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, well supported by an able deputy, provides ambitious and determined leadership. This is characterised by a deep concern that every pupil in school should have the chance to be successful.
- Pupils enjoy their learning because teachers plan lessons that interest and enthuse them. As a result, most pupils currently in the school make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils rise to teachers' high expectations of their behaviour and their learning and benefit from the good teaching they receive as they move through the school.
- The nurturing, caring ethos is noticeable in all aspects of school life. Pupils have a secure understanding of their own spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The leadership and teaching in the early years are effective and, as a result, children make good progress and grow in confidence in a safe and stimulating environment.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for in the school. The robust systems that are in place, coupled with leaders' knowledge of all pupils, reflect the strong safeguarding culture. Pupils are confident that adults will listen to their concerns and act upon them quickly.
- Parents speak very highly of all aspects of the school's work and especially value the extra support received when pupils are struggling.
- Behaviour is exemplary and pupils conduct themselves impeccably around the school. They are caring and considerate towards each other and to those within the wider community.
- Phonics teaching is improving but not all adults have developed the expertise to teach skills accurately.
- The content of pupils' writing is often of a high standard but occasionally is let down by their weak spelling skills, reflecting gaps in their knowledge of phonics.
- While leaders know the school well, the school's action plans are not precise enough to allow governors to hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions on pupils' achievements. Some middle leaders do not play a full enough role in monitoring their areas of responsibility.
- Most pupils make good progress because of overall good teaching. Occasionally pupils who are most able or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make the progress of which they are capable because tasks do not fully match their needs.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement further by making sure that:
 - teaching consistently matches the needs of pupils and is pitched so that the more able are challenged appropriately and those who need extra support learn at the right pace
 - the teaching of phonics is consistent so that a higher number of pupils reach the standards expected of them in key stage 1
 - the teaching of spelling is strengthened to improve the quality of pupils' writing in key stage 2.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school so that:
 - middle leaders are clear about their responsibilities to monitor and evaluate areas of their work
 - leaders at all levels set out plans which are sharply focused on what the school needs to do to improve progress for all groups of pupils and against which school leaders and governors can judge the impact of their priorities to improve teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders and governors have ensured that they have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They focus their attention and resources on making improvements to address any weaknesses including appointing additional staff to improve attendance.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead by example. They set high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. By providing appropriate levels of support and challenge, they ensure that staff morale is high and have secured improvements in many areas of the school's work, including the good progress which pupils make.
- Leaders carefully monitor the progress that all pupils make. The school's rigorous assessment information is checked against regular observation of teaching and reviews of the work pupils do in books. This means that pupils who are not achieving as well as they should are quickly identified and provided with extra support to enable them to catch up.
- The curriculum is effective in meeting pupils' needs and rapidly improving their basic skills. Opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in exciting and memorable experiences, including musical and sporting activities. These enrich the curriculum and, together with the strong Christian ethos that the school promotes, contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The development of pupils' understanding of British values is equally well planned. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The pupil premium funding is used carefully and effectively to support the large number of disadvantaged pupils. A broad range of initiatives, including employing a pastoral support leader, are helping to make sure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. In 2016, the overall progress that this group made by the time they left school was similar to that of all pupils nationally.
- The school uses the additional government funding for sport and physical education well to increase the range of sports taught and to improve the teaching of physical education. Led by an effective subject leader, the school enjoys many successes in school sports' competitions and makes sure that pupils of all abilities have the chance to participate. This work has been recognised in the achievement of the School Games Gold award.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used carefully to promote their achievement. Skilled teaching assistants know the pupils well and adjust learning or activities to enable them to achieve. Leaders liaise successfully with outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the additional support they need to overcome barriers and meet their emotional and personal needs.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' support and agrees that the school's judgement of all areas as 'good' is accurate. Their discussions with leaders have identified the need for further improvement in the teaching of phonics.

- Middle leaders embrace their roles with commitment and enthusiasm. They make a good contribution to improving teaching and learning in several areas of the curriculum. They provide support for colleagues and have produced plans showing that they recognise the school's strengths and areas that need to be improved. However, some of these plans are not focused sharply enough on how the changes they want to achieve will improve outcomes for pupils. Some middle leaders are not clear about their responsibilities to monitor and evaluate areas of their work. This means they are not always confident of the impact of the improvements they have helped to bring about.
- Senior leaders' evaluation of the school's work is accurate and the effectiveness of actions taken is evident in the many improvements seen in the school, including in teaching and learning. Improvement plans focus on important priorities but do not always identify how the actions will improve outcomes for pupils or how success will be measured. This means governors do not have all the information they need to hold leaders to account.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is effective. Governors are committed to, and rightfully proud of, the good standing the school has in the local community.
- Governors are actively involved in the life of the school. They understand their role in improving the quality of education and the standards pupils achieve. They ask challenging questions when they need more information from leaders.
- Governors have received appropriate safeguarding training and have a range of useful skills and experience connected to their work outside school. They carefully oversee the school's policies and procedures to reduce risks for pupils.
- Governors are aware of the challenges leaders face in trying to improve the attendance of pupils and contribute their skills and knowledge of the local community to strengthen the work of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Systems in place to keep pupils safe are robust. Staff recruitment procedures are thorough and well-trained school staff are deployed appropriately.
- The caring culture established among staff and pupils creates a climate where concerns can be identified and reported. The designated safeguarding leaders work closely with staff and provide highly effective support to children and families.
- Risk assessments are conducted rigorously. Procedures and protocols are regularly reviewed and refreshed to make sure that they are up to date and meet the latest statutory requirements.
- Absences are followed up quickly and staff ensure that children arrive in school safely. The school supports parents when needed and is making strenuous efforts to continue

to improve the attendance of its pupils. Online safety is addressed frequently as part of the school's curriculum.

- The school has close links with external agencies, including social services, health workers and attendance officers, which help and support pupils and staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is effective and teachers and teaching assistants are dedicated, enthusiastic and hardworking. They establish very positive relationships with their pupils, which promote positive attitudes to learning from the moment children join the school.
- Teachers' work to help pupils become more self-assured, resilient learners is paying off. For example, in mathematics, pupils are regularly asked to choose a level of challenge according to difficulty for their mathematical problem-solving activities. They are able to explain the reasons for their choice and understand that making the correct selection helps to deepen their learning.
- Pupils engage well in lessons because teachers plan work that excites and enthuses them. Open-ended questions such as, 'How can Usain Bolt move so quickly?' act as 'drivers' to help pupils explore features of animals and humans in their science lessons.
- Pupils enjoy reading and make good progress, especially in key stage 2. Pupils are encouraged to read a wide range of books from the well-stocked class libraries. They talk with pride and confidence about their choice of authors, including Daniel Defoe, Shakespeare and Arthur Conan Doyle. Pupils who spoke to inspectors explained that the monthly whole-school assemblies to celebrate reading inspire them to explore the work of different authors.
- The teaching of mathematics is strong across the school. There are ample opportunities for pupils to carry out mathematical investigations that help them develop reasoning skills and fluency in calculations. Pupils' confidence and enjoyment of mathematics is growing as shown by pupils in Year 2 who describe themselves as 'mathematicians'.
- Teaching assistants and teachers work closely together to make sure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need to catch up are well supported.
- Teachers develop pupils' writing skills well in key stage 1 and by the time they reach Year 6 the standard of pupils' work is good. However, the work of a few pupils shows some weaknesses in their understanding of spelling patterns with too many spelling errors being repeated. This shows that pupils are not always learning from their mistakes.
- Teachers usually plan lessons that challenge pupils of all abilities, including the most able. In these lessons teachers use their good subject knowledge to pitch work correctly according to pupils' skills and abilities and pupils make rapid progress. Occasionally tasks are not challenging enough for the most able pupils or are too difficult for those who need to catch up. When this happens the pace of learning is slowed.
- The teaching of phonics has improved and pupils are gaining in confidence in their use and application of their phonics knowledge. However, the teaching of phonics is not

always consistent and when adults' subject knowledge is weaker, pupils' progress slows.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders model the school values of 'living, loving and learning together' and this inclusive school makes sure that pupils feel valued and respected.
- The care that staff give pupils shines through all aspects of the school's work. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure and they benefit enormously from the praise and rewards that are given frequently by all staff.
- The school's work in religious education has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to, and respect for, one another. Pupils are taught to be reflective about beliefs and values and develop a growing understanding of diversity, for example in gender, religion, culture and sexual orientation as they move through the school.
- Parents spoken to by inspectors and those who responded to Parent View expressed overwhelming support and praise for the work of staff. Typical comments describe the school as 'great' and 'excellent' and many parents are especially appreciative of the additional support given to children who are struggling or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They use ex-pupils as role models to demonstrate what success looks like and to help build pupils' resilience. The example of the positive attitudes of a Royal Marine who suffered life-changing injuries inspired pupils to understand how to overcome adversity.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. This is because the school plans activities for all classes to ensure that pupils are aware of risks and how to avoid them. Visits to the school by organisations such as the police help pupils to learn about the dangers of gangs. Work with the Canal and Rivers Trust helps pupils to know how to keep safe near the local canal.
- Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy the opportunities to take on additional responsibility. They are encouraged to take decisions and play an active part in school life. For instance, the eco council was instrumental in getting a 'bike pod' so that pupils were motivated to cycle to school and able to store their bikes safely.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around the school and in lessons is often exemplary. Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming to staff, each other and visitors. They willingly engage in conversation and are keen to share what they have been learning.

- In lessons, pupils are attentive and engaged in their tasks. This is because staff cultivate very positive relationships with pupils and have made sure that routines are well established. Pupils look to their teachers for inspiration and guidance and are keen to do their best.
- Behaviour outside classrooms is also praiseworthy. Pupils move around the school sensibly and without fuss. Playtimes and lunchtimes are calm and pupils return to their classrooms ready to learn.
- Incidents of bullying are rare and, if they do occur, are tackled quickly. This was confirmed by pupils who talked to inspectors and also through the school's own thorough records of incidents.
- The attendance of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is rising slowly, though it is still below that expected of all pupils nationally. One of the causes of this lower attendance is the high mobility rate of some pupils who remain on the school's register after they have moved away from the area while parents try to find a new school for their children. The pupils who are persistently absent are carefully monitored and well supported to encourage better attendance. Some of these pupils have special medical needs or difficult home circumstances that prevent them from arriving in school on time every day. The positive relationship that pastoral staff build with parents helps to improve attendance for some pupils.
- The school does everything it can to improve the attendance of individual pupils, including collecting pupils from their homes and providing them with breakfast. Pupils enjoy these arrangements. As a result, they have a very positive start to their school day and are in the right frame of mind for learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Typically, pupils enter school with skills that are below those expected for their age in many areas of learning. They make good progress, especially in writing and mathematics, as they move through the school. Progress accelerates in Year 6 so that when they leave St Elizabeth's, most pupils reach standards that are similar to, or above, the national average in reading and writing and mathematics.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, the large majority of pupils attained the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics, which places them above similar pupils nationally. There were also improvements in the number of pupils reaching the higher levels, especially in reading and mathematics. Writing in 2016 was not as strong but the school's assessment information predicts an improvement this year. Inspection evidence from observations and looking in pupils' books shows that the school's expectations are realistic.
- Attainment improved at the end of key stage 1 in 2016 and was comparable to that of pupils nationally in the case of the expected level for writing, though still below average for reading and mathematics. This was because too few of the most able pupils achieved the higher levels of which they were capable. The school's assessment records show that a higher proportion of the most able pupils are now on track to reach the higher levels and inspection evidence confirms this judgement.

- The number of pupils who reach the expected standard in phonics has been below average for the last three years, though the difference is diminishing. The progress pupils make in phonics is better in early years than in key stage 1. This is because some adults in key stage 1 do not demonstrate the depth of subject knowledge required to help pupils apply their phonic skills confidently. Leaders are aware of this weakness and are taking measures to improve it.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Across the school, the majority of disadvantaged pupils are making progress in line with that of other pupils nationally. This is because the school regularly monitors the progress of these pupils and ensures that they are supported well in improving.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points when they are in school. Staff are given extra training to deliver special programmes to help pupils catch up and to make sure they have the support they need. The attendance of a small number of pupils with medical conditions is low and this affects their progress but the school works very closely with parents, who value the support their children receive.
- All members of St Elizabeth's are rightly proud of the success the school achieves in other areas of the curriculum, including music and physical education. This is demonstrated by the school's commitment to ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and to perform for an audience in one of the many musical events in which the school participates. All disadvantaged pupils are prompted to pursue a love of music with free instrumental music tuition. Performances in public at local care homes or churches are regular features of the school's calendar. The most able musicians have the opportunity to perform with the Hallé Orchestra. Similarly, the school's sporting success is celebrated in the many competitions which pupils enjoy and the awards they receive.

Early years provision

Good

- Overall, children in the Nursery class start school with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age, but a few have more-developed skills.
- Published information about the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception shows that there have been improvements year on year. In 2016, the number reaching this level was still below that reached by most children of a similar age but the difference is diminishing. The school's own assessments show that these improvements are being maintained.
- Children from the lowest starting points make good progress as they move through the early years and almost all of this group reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. Few children go beyond the expected level and this is because the most able children are not always sufficiently challenged. However, all children acquire confidence and a wide range of skills that show they are well prepared for Year 1.
- The early years is led effectively and the leaders know the strengths and areas requiring further development of both Nursery and Reception classes. However, the

plans for improvement are not precise enough to show what is expected from the actions taken or how success will be measured.

- Good-quality teaching, from both teachers and teaching assistants, is responsive to the individual needs of children. Plans and activities are quickly adjusted to maintain the interest of children and widen their experiences. A typical example seen was when children were quickly taken off to hunt for mini-beasts in the school grounds when a small group showed an interest in insect life. This swift recognition by adults of children's eagerness to engage with the world around them keeps children highly motivated to learn.
- Phonics is taught systematically in the early years. The good subject knowledge of teachers and teaching assistants supports children in making good progress in learning their letters and sounds.
- Leaders rightly place a strong emphasis on developing children's communication skills and staff have received rigorous training to support them in developing children's speech and language. This approach has been effective and children make rapid progress in their confidence and well-being. Parents support this view and many spoke of how their once-shy children are now self-assured when talking to adults and each other. In 2016, children reached standards above those expected by others nationally in their communication and language skills.
- Children feel safe because staff develop very positive relationships with them. This helps to promote security and consistency in the children's lives. Children grow in confidence and begin to make choices by seeking out preferred activities and resources.
- Children in early years classes benefit from a wide range of indoor and outdoor resources that provide exciting and stimulating learning opportunities. Provision is well organised and activities are full of fun, appealing to children's imagination and interests. For example, during the inspection children were eagerly waiting for incubated hens' eggs to hatch during the next few days.
- Parents are very positive about the provision in the early years and appreciate the active part that they are encouraged to play in the school.
- Staff keep children safe and care for them well in the early years. They are vigilant in safeguarding children and make swift referrals to the headteacher if they have any concerns. Safeguarding is highly effective because the robust policy and procedures are well known and understood by all staff.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 104932 |
| Local authority | Sefton |
| Inspection number | 10032389 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 425 |
| Appropriate authority | Local authority |
| Chair | Rev Barry McAllister |
| Headteacher | Mr Liam Daniels |
| Telephone number | 01519225752 |
| Website | http://www.st-elizabethsprimary.co.uk |
| Email address | admin.stelizabeths@schools.sefton.gov.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 7-8 November 2012 |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary school is larger than average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who do not have English as their first language is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Very few of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities or an education, health and care plan.

- The number of pupils entering or leaving the school at other than the usual times is above average.
- The school met the current floor standards in 2016. This is the minimum expectation of pupils' progress set by the government.
- In addition to a breakfast club, the school offers a wide range of extra-curricular clubs for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed across all classes and key stages. Some observations were conducted jointly by the lead inspector and the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, subject leaders, governors, pastoral staff and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, scrutinised their work and talked informally with pupils during breaktimes.
- The views of pupils were also considered during more formal discussions with inspectors and nine pupils completed the online survey.
- Inspectors took account of the school's own surveys of pupils and parents.
- A wide range of the school's own information and documentation was studied, including: the school's own data on progress; self-evaluation and plans to raise attainment; improvement plans and records of the checks made on teaching and learning; records relating to attendance; behaviour records; documents relating to safeguarding and an external review of the school's performance.
- Anonymised information about the performance management of staff was also examined as well as safeguarding practices and policies.
- The opinions of staff were taken into account through formal and informal discussions and consideration of the 19 responses made to Ofsted's questionnaire.
- The views of 20 parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire were considered. Inspectors spoke to over 16 parents in the school and parents' comments communicated via free text were examined.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
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| Ann Gill | Ofsted Inspector |
| Pamela Potter | Ofsted Inspector |
| Gaynor Rennie | Ofsted Inspector |

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