

St Charles' Catholic Primary School

Tramway Road, Aigburth, Liverpool, Merseyside L17 7JA

Inspection dates

28–29 November 2017

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 provides strong, effective leadership. She has the confidence and trust of staff, pupils and parents.
- Leaders have driven forward rapid improvements in teaching. As a result, most pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Governance is effective. Governors have the skills and information to hold school leaders to account.
- Pupils come into school with smiles on their faces. This is because they see it as a calm, safe haven where they feel valued as individuals. Pupils behave well in and outside the classroom.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved markedly and is now good
- Vulnerable pupils, some with complex needs, are catered for very well at St Charles' Primary. Staff go the extra mile to ensure that they make good progress.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' achievement, particularly in the teaching of phonics.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning because of successful work by staff to improve attitudes. Pupils take part readily in the many out-of-school activities that are offered.
- Leaders have successfully introduced a new, broad and balanced curriculum. It is based on a range of topics. Pupils enjoy the learning possibilities within these topics. Homework is set to reinforce pupils' learning.
- Pupils have a good understanding about the Christian faith and other cultures and religions. They have a real appreciation of life in modern Britain.
- The provision in the early years is good. Children make good progress. However, the outdoor area is not fully exploited to provide a range of opportunities that improve children's learning.
- Teachers do not ensure that grammar, punctuation and spelling strategies are taught consistently to improve pupils' writing across the curriculum.
- Some teachers do not routinely set activities that extend pupils' knowledge and skills at greater depth.
- Some subject leaders have a secure understanding of pupils' progress in their areas. However, this is not consistent across all subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of pupils working at greater depth in all subjects by:
 - making sure that all teachers set work at the right level of difficulty for pupils
 - reinforcing the importance of correct grammar, punctuation and spelling in writing across the wider curriculum.
- Ensure that all subject leaders have the required skills to monitor effectively the progress that pupils make in their respective areas.
- Accelerate progress and further improve outcomes for children in the early years by:
 - ensuring that the outside learning area is planned, organised and resourced in a way that fully meets children’s needs and improves their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment, the strong, shared vision of the headteacher has established a positive, ambitious culture within the school. As a result, pupils thrive. One parent's comment sums this up: 'The headteacher is an asset to the school. She encourages pupils to grow spiritually as well as academically. School is both stimulating and enjoyable.'
- The headteacher's recent review of leaders' roles and responsibilities has allowed her to build a united and dynamic leadership team. Leaders work in close collaboration with each other. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes are good.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a clear understanding of those pupils who require extra support. Interventions are put in place and reviewed on a regular basis so that pupils make improved progress. Funding is spent wisely.
- Senior leaders have a thorough approach to monitoring teaching and assessment. They work very effectively with other schools and the local authority to improve moderation and secure training opportunities.
- Some subject leaders do not have an accurate view of the effectiveness of pupils' progress in their areas. However, in mathematics, English and religious education, subject leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of the progress that pupils make.
- Leaders understand the need to drive forward higher expectations so that more pupils can achieve greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders and staff provide a broad and balanced curriculum that excites and engages pupils. This is underpinned by a wide variety of trips to places such as art galleries, wildlife centres and the town hall. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as 'Change for life' science that builds pupils' self-esteem, choir, gardening, multi-skills and sport. These activities nurture pupils' interests and develop their skills well.
- The management of teachers' performance is used effectively to reward high-quality teaching and secure improvement. Leaders set teachers targets that are linked to the impact that teaching has on outcomes. Teachers are successfully supported by strong, targeted professional development from their learning community and the local authority.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is actively encouraged, particularly through the Christian ethos of the school.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. A Year 6 member of the school council explained, 'I know about democracy because we voted for our playground equipment.' Pupils know about the key values of respect and tolerance, and demonstrate these through their actions.
- The primary school physical education and sport premium is used efficiently to promote active lifestyles. Sports clubs abound. There are plenty of opportunities to compete with other schools and within the region, where pupils make their mark. Pupils benefit

from regular lessons delivered by a sports coach. Staff also benefit from professional development opportunities.

- Pupil premium funding is used effectively so that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers and other pupils nationally. Additional support is in place to raise the achievement of pupils of all abilities in all year groups. School leaders are determined to sustain and build on recent improvements.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the work of the school. Most would recommend it to another parent and they believe that it is well led and managed. Many who made their views known to inspectors were full of praise for what the headteacher has done. Parents appreciate the changes she has made since the last inspection.
- Leaders communicate well with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and happy.

Governance of the school

- Governance is good because governors:
 - have the skills and information to hold school leaders to account
 - are skilful at interpreting the assessment information that they receive from the headteacher
 - demonstrate a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
 - ask informed questions and follow them up
 - ensure that their training is current and up to date, and take their responsibility for safeguarding seriously.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Up-to-date policies and procedures are in place and staff receive appropriate training and information. Consequently, staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a child's well-being and prompt action is taken to keep children safe.
- Records are well kept and stored securely. Leaders work closely with outside agencies when required. With a high proportion of vulnerable children in the school, leaders have developed a strong culture of keeping children safe.
- Staff know individual pupils well. No stone is left unturned when it comes to supporting vulnerable pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Improvements have led to good teaching, learning and assessment across the whole of the school. Leaders have quickly addressed any weak teaching, providing appropriate support when needed. This has led to pupils making good progress from their starting points.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons that ensure that pupils are constantly interested and on task. All staff use questioning effectively to challenge pupils to think carefully and explain their answers in detail.
- The curriculum has been designed to appeal to all pupils. Texts of different genres are chosen to excite and stimulate pupils' imaginations. An example of this was in Year 5 where pupils were studying a text by Michael Morpurgo about a robin coming home for Christmas. Pupils demonstrated the art of 'darting' and 'pecking' to the sound of birdsong playing in the background, before they fell on their writing with great enthusiasm.
- Time is used productively because pupils are keen to learn. Pupils want to do well. They show resilience in their learning and inspectors saw clear examples of this in classrooms. One pupil put it well when he said: 'If you just don't get it, Miss takes you out for a few minutes. Then you get it. Simple really!' These 'flexible' interventions support learning at the moment it is needed so that pupils make more rapid progress.
- Teachers are effectively developing pupils' ability to reason and solve problems in mathematics. Pupils in all classes are well supported with additional equipment as and when they need it. They understand how to improve their work.
- Teachers ensure that pupils learn and practise different kinds of writing. Even though they focus on composition and the use of expressive vocabulary, teachers do not always ensure that the strategies in grammar, punctuation and spelling are reinforced.
- Science is taught effectively. A good example is in Year 1 where a floor book of pupils' experiments clearly demonstrates a hands-on approach to the subject. When finding out which material is the best one to use for a teddy's umbrella, pupils experimented by putting different fabrics on their heads and pouring a small amount of water onto them.
- Teaching assistants support learning very effectively. They are deployed well to work with different pupils at appropriate times, particularly in the teaching of phonics. Reading has therefore improved because weaker readers are increasingly able to work out tricky words. Pupils also demonstrate improved ability to understand and answer questions about a text. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also benefit from this thorough approach.
- At times, teachers do not use assessment effectively to plan opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth. When this lack of challenge happens, pupils' learning slows down because work is too easy and they are ready for more demanding work, particularly the most able.
- Information is regularly shared with parents. It gives them an indication of how their children are doing in relation to the standards expected of them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are confident learners and their physical and emotional well-being is promoted very

effectively. Many vulnerable pupils at St Charles' feel that the school is not just their oasis, it is also their haven.

- Pupils feel safe at this school. They are well cared for and staff have a very good understanding of the needs of each pupil. Social and emotional needs of pupils are met effectively through the school's 'Think Yourself Great' clubs led by specially trained staff.
- Pupils take pride in their school and their schoolwork. Pupils look after their books well and most pupils take great care with their presentation. They are keen to improve the quality of what they produce and strive for the recognition that their good work brings.
- Without exception, parents, staff and pupils say that school is a safe place. Pupils are taught to stay safe through a range of age-appropriate activities. E-safety is taught very effectively using a cartoon character who helps pupils to have secure knowledge of how to stay safe online.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and know about the impact that it can have on people. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and if they have any concerns these are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils who are elected to be on the school council play an important role in improving the school experience for all pupils. They all feel that their contributions are valued and appreciated by school leaders. Their friends appreciate them too, whether it is helping friends to resolve a disagreement, choosing prizes for improved attendance or helping a friend to solve a problem in mathematics.
- Pupils have a good grasp of British values such as tolerance, respect, the rule of law, individual liberty and democracy. They are tolerant and respectful of others. Their understanding of the multicultural aspects of Britain is strong. Pupils raise money for their link school in Ghana and to help those less fortunate than themselves, such as the victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster.
- School leaders give safety in school a high priority. The site is secure, and robust arrangements to check the identity of visitors is in place. Pupils who attend the before- and after-school clubs are safe and well looked after.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are kind, considerate, respectful and polite.
- Pupils' behaviour inside and outside the classroom is good. The start of the day is calm and orderly. Pupils are punctual and well prepared for learning. During social time, pupils play sensibly together and behaviour observed by inspectors at breaktime and lunchtime was sensible and positive.
- In lessons, pupils listen carefully to staff and to each other, and display self-discipline when working independently. Inspectors saw very little disruption to learning when visiting classrooms. Pupils understand the behaviour and rewards systems, which are used consistently. Pupils value the fact that good behaviour is rewarded.
- Attendance has improved. Most pupils now have excellent attendance. School staff work well with pupils, families and outside agencies to improve the attendance of individuals. These successful strategies have improved the attendance of those pupils

who had higher absence rates.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills from their starting points. An increasing number of pupils are starting to move towards the higher standards in key stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have agreed that this is an area for further development.
- Pupils' books provide evidence to show that their current progress is good across a range of subjects.
- Accurate, reliable information informs leaders how well pupils are doing in English and mathematics. In the 2017 national tests, Year 6 pupils made good progress in mathematics and reading, and similar progress to other pupils nationally in writing.
- Leaders have developed the teaching of phonics through effective professional support. As a result, for the past three years, the majority of pupils in Year 1 achieve the expected standard in the national phonics screening check. The most able readers read fluently and with good comprehension. They can predict and infer, and they read widely both online at home and in school. Least-able pupils read with fluency that is appropriate to their development.
- Although writing is improving, leaders have recognised a shortcoming in pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling, and this is a focus for improvement.
- Pupils demonstrate secure basic skills in mathematics. Older pupils can choose different strategies to find the correct answers.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points. Work in books shows that they are now reaching age-related standards in reading and mathematics as they move through the school.
- The SENCo uses the extra funding efficiently to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities improve their progress. Leaders organise provision for these pupils effectively, identify their needs promptly and provide targeted support that makes sure they can catch up.
- Pupils' progress overall is good, although at times a lack of challenge means that outcomes for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not improving towards those of other pupils nationally with the same starting points as quickly as they should.
- Pupils' good achievement and strong personal development ensures that they are well prepared for their next stage in education.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of the early years is effective. Children make good progress from their starting points, including those who are disadvantaged. All aspects of safeguarding and health and safety are managed well.
- The early years leader has established very good links with parents. Parents are invited

to drop-in mornings and receive good communication about their children's progress. Parents are encouraged to participate in their children's learning and to contribute to the records of children's progress. The school provides sessions for parents to learn about how their children are taught and how to support them at home.

- The early years leader has a good grasp of assessment developed in collaboration with other schools. As a result, the tracking of the children's progress is accurate and well informed. Evidence of the progress children make is clearly recorded and information made available to parents.
- Teachers constantly reflect on how they can improve the early years offer. Consequently, children are taught effectively in the early years. Staff have created a lively, stimulating indoor environment. This provides children with a good range of opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across all areas of learning. Children respond well and behaviour is good. They persevere with tasks, and show concentration and good cooperation with their peers.
- The outside area includes a wide range of equipment that helps to develop children's physical skills, confidence and cooperation. However, it is not fully exploited to provide a wide enough range of opportunities to develop all children's learning.
- Children are presented with activities that grab and hold their attention. The story of *The Gruffalo* led to opportunities for colourful conversations and drama. One teaching assistant made a tunnel with the children for the Gruffalo to hide in. Such was the level of imaginative play, the children almost believed the Gruffalo was actually in there.
- Additional funds are used successfully to close the attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils. Adults question children well and encourage them to speak. Children in the early years are well prepared for moving to Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	104646
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10037773

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Roberts
Headteacher	Mrs A Roberts
Telephone number	0151 727 5830
Website	www.stcharlescatholicprimary.com
Email address	charles-ao@stcharlesliverpool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school with a higher percentage of girls than nationally in Year 4, while Years 1 and 6 are heavily weighted towards boys.
- A substantive headteacher, formerly a school improvement officer for the local authority, was appointed in January 2016.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. There are higher numbers of these pupils in the current Years 3 and 6.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is high and nearly twice the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from a minority ethnic background is below average. There are a small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. An

increasing number of pupils from Europe are joining the school and these pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

- More pupils than is usually found join or leave the school at other than the usual times.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' learning and progress. The school met the government's coasting standards in 2015 and 2016. St Charles' Catholic Primary is a nationally accredited Healthy School and holds full extended school status. It is an active member of the Dingle Granby Toxteth Collaborative of 16 schools and the local authority's Special Educational Needs Consortium.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed teaching and learning in lessons. These included joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their learning.
- Inspectors talked to parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors took account of the free-text messages sent in by parents. There were 22 positive responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were 19 responses to the staff questionnaire and seven pupils responded to the pupil questionnaire. All responses were overwhelmingly positive.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the vice-chair and members of the governing body, one representative of the local authority, a representative from the archdiocese and school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents including the school's own information on pupils' current progress; anonymised evidence of performance management and professional development; the school development plan and school self-evaluation documents; planning of work in different subjects; leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Maggie Parker, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tina Cleugh	Ofsted Inspector

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