

St John's Catholic Junior School

Old Chester Road, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside CH63 7LH

Inspection dates

3–4 July 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This school is well led and managed. The headteacher strives to ensure that all pupils achieve to the best of their ability.
- Mutual respect and strong relationships are characteristics of this happy, hard-working school. A real sense of teamwork permeates St John's Junior School.
- From the moment pupils set foot in the school at the start of Year 3, procedures for monitoring their progress are rigorous and accurate. However, targets set for teachers as part of their performance management regarding pupils' academic achievement are not precise enough.
- The quality of teaching is good. While, in the past, published data has indicated that progress is weak, the inspection evidence shows that most pupils make good progress in their learning in a wide range of subjects.
- On occasion, pupils, particularly those who learn more quickly, are provided with activities that do not challenge them. This is most noticeable in writing and mathematics.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving quickly. However, they still do not perform as well as others nationally in writing and mathematics.
- Delightful, friendly and well-behaved pupils are a credit to the school and their families. Pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- British values are firmly embedded in all aspects of the school's work.
- Partnership working is a real strength of the school.
- Governors support the school well and ensure that school leaders are held accountable.
- Almost all parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. They typically commented: 'It is an excellent, caring and well-run school.'
- The school has crafted a curriculum which ignites pupils' passion for learning. However, the leadership of subjects in the wider curriculum is not as well developed as that of English and mathematics.
- Targets in the school development plan lack precision.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching does not focus sharply enough on the learning that has taken place for different groups of pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, and thereby pupils' progress and outcomes, by:
 - making sure that recent initiatives to improve reading, writing and mathematics are sustained to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards, particularly in writing and mathematics
 - continuing to diminish the differences between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally in writing and mathematics.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that teachers' targets relating to pupils' attainment and progress and those in the school development plan are measurable
 - providing more detailed information to teachers on the learning that has taken place for different groups of pupils when monitoring the quality of teaching
 - embedding the role of middle leaders of subjects in the wider curriculum so that they have an even greater impact on teaching, learning and assessment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The leadership and management of the school are strong. The headteacher is continually looking for ways to improve, and encourages her staff team to be innovative and try out new ideas to enhance the quality of education provided at the school.
- Staff work well as a team. They feel valued, both as teachers and individuals, by senior leaders. Staff are proud to work at the school and typically commented: 'I wouldn't want to work anywhere else.' Those new to the profession are well supported by staff at all levels.
- The headteacher knows her school well. She is crystal clear about what the school does well and what needs to improve. These priorities are set out in the school development plan, with clear lines of accountability. However, targets are not measurable. This makes it more difficult for senior leaders and governors to monitor, with accuracy, the progress that the school is making towards achieving its goals.
- Performance management procedures for teachers and teaching assistants are effective. Training opportunities are securely linked to the school's priorities. However, feedback given to staff after monitoring of their teaching does not place enough emphasis on the learning that has taken place for different groups of pupils. As with the school development plan, teachers' targets for pupils' progress and attainment are not measurable. As a result, leaders are not able to hold them fully to account for the progress that pupils are making.
- Pupils' progress is closely monitored through half-termly pupil reviews. Particular attention is given to the progress of those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged.
- Leaders of English and mathematics know their subjects well. As a result of recent initiatives that have been implemented, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are improving. For example, a new mathematics scheme has been introduced which has resulted in a more consistent approach to the teaching of this subject across the school. Reading now has a much higher profile across the school and there are dedicated book areas in each classroom. High-quality and challenging texts have been purchased to develop pupils' reading skills across the curriculum. The leaders of both subjects monitor closely the progress that pupils make alongside the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- A broad and balanced curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Subjects are either taught discretely or as part of a topic. Pupils' learning is further enhanced by numerous trips, visitors to the school, after-school clubs and special events. However, systems to monitor subjects in the wider curriculum are not as well embedded as those in English and mathematics. For example, some leaders of these subjects have not had the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching in their area of responsibility or the skills that pupils are acquiring. Systems to monitor the progress that pupils make as they move through the school in the wider curriculum have recently been introduced.

- The sport funding is used well by leaders to encourage pupils to be healthy and active. Specialist sports coaches enhance the teaching of physical education, thereby supporting teachers in developing their skills. Pupils now take part in more competitive sports because of the effective use of this funding. For example, girls have represented Merseyside in football competitions. Boys have also taken part in competitions organised by local football clubs.
- The pupil premium funding is spent wisely to help to diminish the differences between disadvantaged pupils in the school and others nationally. The headteacher has a good understanding of the barriers to learning that this group of pupils faces. The money has been used to provide targeted support to overcome these barriers and to ensure that disadvantaged pupils have the same chances as everyone else. Such good practice demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The SEN funding is used well. The money is spent on staffing and additional resources to support targeted learning programmes. The school works well with outside agencies to ensure that this group of pupils achieve to the very best of their ability. For example, teachers from a local special school pay weekly visits to the school to oversee the impact of targeted interventions in English and mathematics.
- British values are threaded through all aspects of the school's work. Through the curriculum, pupils are gaining a secure understanding of gender-based issues, different faiths and cultures and the rule of law. Leaders and staff have ensured that pupils are aware of the importance of tolerance and respect for their peers, adults and others beyond the school community. Consequently, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The school has established positive relationships with parents. They believe that the school is 'exceptionally well led'. They appreciate the real sense of community that the school provides. They typically commented: 'Dedicated staff put children at the heart of everything that they do.'
- Collaborative working is a real strength of the school. Leaders and staff work in partnership with a cluster of Catholic schools and five junior schools in the local area to support each other with training and moderation.
- Transition arrangements into the school and onwards to secondary school are effective. These arrangements are tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils, such as those who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Governance of the school

- Governors bring a varied range of experience to their roles, including educationalists who can analyse data independently of the headteacher.
- There is no question about governors' dedication to the school or their desire to improve further outcomes for all pupils.
- Governors have a secure understanding of what the school does well and the further improvements that are needed.
- They have a good awareness of the progress that different pupils make. They are passionate about ensuring that the quality of education provided by St John's educates the whole child, academically, socially and emotionally.

- Governors undertake training to keep their knowledge and skills up to date.
- Statutory duties, such as safeguarding, are taken seriously.
- Governors act as critical friends to the school. They support and challenge the school in equal measure.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff in the school have had safeguarding training and are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. They have a secure understanding of the signs that a child is at risk of harm.
- Appropriate checks are carried out on all staff prior to employment, and the identity of visitors is closely checked.
- Written information on the school's safeguarding procedures is given to all visitors on arrival at the school. The entrance to the school is secure.
- Staff have received training in the 'Prevent' duty. Most are aware of what to look out for to keep pupils safe in relation to radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and extremism.
- The school works well with outside agencies to support vulnerable families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- School leaders have judged the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to be good. Inspection evidence supports this evaluation.
- Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They encourage pupils to be resourceful, resilient and reflective, and this contributes to the good progress that pupils make.
- Teachers have full ownership of the school's assessment system and they monitor and track children's progress carefully. However, on occasion, they underestimate pupils' capabilities. Consequently, there are times when pupils are provided with activities which do not stretch and challenge them, most notably in mathematics and writing.
- The learning environment, particularly in shared areas of the school, is vibrant and stimulating. Particularly noteworthy is the high-quality of the artwork, which magically brings many aspects of the curriculum to life.
- Some staff make good use of questioning to probe and deepen pupils' learning. This was exemplified by questioning used well to enable pupils to make predictions and explain their reasoning, and to draw out their ideas.
- Pupils are keen writers. Work in books and on display shows that they write for a variety of purposes, such as poetry, diaries, newspaper articles and recounts. Pupils' writing is often inspired by pictures, which stimulates them to write imaginatively, with flair and creativity. However, at times they use worksheets with small boxes which prevent them writing at length or in greater depth, particularly those who are the most able.

- Pupils enjoy mathematics, particularly discussing and sharing their ideas in groups. Some have access to tactile resources, at an age-appropriate level, to help them to develop mathematical concepts. However, at times the activities to develop pupils' calculation skills are not pitched at the correct level. In addition, the most able pupils are not consistently provided with problem-solving activities which encourage them to think and reason at a deeper level.
- A love of reading is promoted well across the school. Pupils enjoy reading and do so with fluency and correct intonation. They have a secure understanding of book terminology and read books by a variety of authors. They can express their preferences relating to their favourite authors and the types of books that they enjoy reading.
- Children are becoming keen geographers, historians, artists and linguists. They eagerly participate in Spanish lessons and research the lifestyles and cultures of countries taking part in the World Cup. They learn about the history of art, such as the pre-Raphaelites, and develop their artistic talents using a wide and varied range of media.
- Comments from parents indicate that they are also of the opinion that the quality of teaching is good.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils value their education and are keen to do well in life. Many expressed their hopes and desires to go on to further education to become doctors, marine biologists or architects.
- Relationships across the school are caring and strong. Pupils respect each other and feel safe in school. They would have no hesitation in disclosing any worries or concerns to their teacher or another trusted member of staff.
- Pupils learn about the importance of contributing to society. Through the work of the school council, eco council and their roles as buddies, they learn the skills and habits that will support them in becoming responsible citizens in modern Britain.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying and the distress that this can cause. They told inspectors that bullying does sometimes happen but that staff soon sort it out. Pupils are confident that any type of discriminatory behaviour, including that which is gender based, would not be tolerated.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when online. They recognise the importance of not disclosing their password to anyone and of the potential dangers of talking to strangers when online.
- Pupils' mental health is promoted well. Parents commented that their children's emotional needs are met well by staff, who are 'supportive, approachable, hardworking and dedicated'.
- Lunchtimes are well supervised and provide pupils with time to relax and chat with their friends. The meals provide a healthy and nutritious diet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They go out of their way to make visitors to the school feel welcome. The school has a warm and caring atmosphere.
- Overall, standards of behaviour in class are good. On occasion, if pupils become disinterested in their learning they become restless and fidgety.
- Similar good standards of behaviour were observed in the playground. Pupils told inspectors that the provision of play equipment would make it a more pleasurable experience for them.
- Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner. They look smart in their school uniform.
- Attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average. In addition, fewer pupils are persistently absent from school than before. The importance of being punctual and coming to school on a regular basis is promoted well through the school website. Parents are encouraged not to take their children on holiday during term time. Good attendance is celebrated, and any unexplained absences are swiftly followed up.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published information in 2017 suggests that pupils' progress has been weak, particularly in writing and mathematics. However, the school's own analysis of this group of pupils' progress and attainment at the end of Year 6 paints a very different picture from that of the published data. The school's own assessment information shows that most pupils typically make good progress from their different starting points.
- The work in current pupils' books and the school's own assessment information show that most pupils are working at a standard expected for their age. In addition, more pupils are reaching the higher standards, most notably in reading.
- There remain some inconsistencies in the rate of progress that some pupils make, particularly those of higher ability. This is because, at times, they are not provided with activities which extend and deepen their learning, particularly in mathematics and writing.
- Baseline assessments carried out by the school at the point of entry of each child are detailed and accurate. Staff take great care to ensure the accuracy of their assessments as pupils move through the school.
- External moderation is a central part of the school's work. Teachers check the accuracy of their assessments with each other, governors and a cluster of Catholic schools and other junior schools in the locality. Such effective practice ensures that teachers have an accurate picture of the progress that differing groups of pupils are making in each year group.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong gains in their learning. This is because of the effective spending of the pupil premium funding. The school's assessment information

shows that differences between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing quickly, but more so in reading than in writing and mathematics.

- Pupils make strong progress in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum, such as geography, history, science, art and design and Spanish. Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to write at length across the wider curriculum. This helps to deepen their knowledge and understanding. For example, displays of pupils' work show that they write extensively about the rainforest, the Amazon and the geographical features of El Salvador. Such effective practice contributes to the strong progress that pupils are making in some of these subjects.
- Taking into consideration their diverse needs, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong gains in their learning. This is due to the high-quality interventions and support they receive from specialist teachers and teaching assistants.
- Most parents agree that their children make good progress while at St John's Junior School. This view is endorsed by the local authority and the Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- Pupils leave the school as well-rounded youngsters who are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

School details

Unique reference number	105080
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10045936

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe McArdle
Headteacher	Elaine Mullins
Telephone number	0151 6459615
Website	www.st-johns-catholic.eschools.co.uk/
Email address	schooloffice@stjohns-junior.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 July 2014

Information about this school

- St John’s Catholic Junior school is an average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across all classes in the school and in a range of subjects.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff, pupils and members of the governing body. Informal discussions were held with parents at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.
- The lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority and of the Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Years 4 and 6 read. They looked at examples of work in their books and on display.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, the school's own information on pupils' starting points and outcomes, and reports on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors took account of the school's own questionnaire to parents and pupils. They also took into consideration the 47 free-text responses from parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Due regard was also taken of the 16 responses from staff and 20 responses from pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Sheila Iwaskow, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tina Cleugh	Ofsted Inspector
Jennie Platt	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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