

St Brigid’s Catholic Primary School

Waterpark Drive, Stockbridge Village, Liverpool, Merseyside L28 7RE

Inspection dates

14–15 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils’ progress is variable and requires improvement, especially in writing and key stage 2.
- Leaders do not have robust systems in place to monitor teaching and learning or to track pupils’ achievement. They are unable to intervene rapidly enough to improve teaching in order to accelerate the progress that pupils make.
- Progress made by disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not good enough.
- Governors do not always challenge senior leaders sufficiently well about the quality of teaching and pupils’ achievement.
- Teaching is too variable across the school. Some teachers do not challenge all groups of learners appropriately and the effective use of time is inconsistent.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length or use their skills of reasoning in mathematics.
- Attendance is below the national average and persistent absence is high.
- Some middle leaders are new to their role and do not have sufficient expertise in their subject area. This means that they are unable to lead effectively and drive improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils feel safe. They behave well in lessons and around school. Pupils are confident and courteous. They work and play amicably together.
- In the early years, children receive high-quality provision. As a result, they make strong gains in their learning and are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school so that it is consistently good and enables all pupils to make accelerated progress especially in key stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that teachers' explanations and the activities set are at the right level for pupils with different abilities
 - assessing pupils' understanding regularly and moving them on to challenging work as soon as they are ready
 - ensuring that time is used effectively in lessons
 - developing teachers' subject knowledge in writing and providing more opportunities for pupils to improve their skills in writing and to practise writing at length across the curriculum
 - ensuring that pupils have frequent opportunities to explain their reasoning and apply their skills in solving mathematical problems.
- Improve leadership and management of the school by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders rigorously check the quality of teaching and take prompt action in addressing inconsistencies
 - ensuring that the pupil premium grant is spent appropriately and effectively to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring that assessment methods are robust, progress is accurately tracked and interventions are focused and effective in raising attainment
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so they contribute fully to improving teaching and outcomes in their subject area
 - improving attendance and reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management have not had a sustained impact on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching and learning sufficiently rigorously. The checks are not regular enough and often the feedback focuses on what teachers are doing rather than on pupils' learning. As a result, teaching is not improving quickly enough.
- Leaders have not developed an effective system for assessing pupils' learning. Assessments are irregular and do not identify accurately the progress that pupils make. Furthermore, leaders do not identify clearly pupils who are falling behind and provide additional targeted support to ensure that they quickly catch up. Where weaknesses have been identified from assessment information, there has been no concerted effort to address them.
- The pupil premium grant is not always used effectively to diminish the difference for disadvantaged pupils with others nationally. Support is not tailored to pupils' needs and as a result it does not have a marked impact. The spending of additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has not yielded good progress. This is due to pupils' specific needs not being correctly identified. Also, additional support is not regularly reviewed or carefully planned to meet pupils' needs.
- Senior leaders have a strong commitment and vision for the school. The support from the local authority has rejuvenated the leadership team, who now have higher expectations for pupils and staff. Leaders have an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Priorities for improvement are clearly identified and action plans detail what needs to be done to bring about positive change. However, leaders are not always rigorous in monitoring changes and evaluating the impact of these actions to see if they are effective in accelerating pupils' progress.
- Local authority advisers have supported leaders in identifying and tackling some weak teaching. This has enabled leaders to improve their support for weaker teaching. As a result, the overall teaching profile is improving. Local authority advisers have delivered a variety of useful training. The school has worked closely with a partner school to provide an intensive coaching programme for all teachers. This has allowed teachers to develop higher expectations, observe good practice and foster a learning culture in school. Procedures for performance management have been tightened to hold teachers to account better for pupils' progress.
- Some middle leaders have been recently appointed to their roles and therefore have not had the time to be fully effective. These middle leaders do not have the requisite knowledge and skills they need to effectively lead and drive improvements in their subject areas.
- The curriculum is broad as the school teaches the expected range of subjects and topics. However, pupils' books show that lessons do not effectively develop pupils' skills and knowledge across all year groups. Also, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in different subjects.

- The primary sports premium is used effectively to increase rates of participation through appointing specialist coaches to develop teachers' expertise and providing pupils with experiences of a wider range of sports and activities.
- Pupils develop a strong moral code. They know what is right and wrong. Pupils are confident, articulate and develop strong social skills. Pupils develop a good awareness of democracy through the school council and pupil leadership team. Provision through assemblies and whole-school faith celebration weeks promotes effective reflection on faith, culture and personal choices. As a result, pupils have valuable skills to contribute positively to life in modern Britain.
- The school works hard to foster positive relationships with parents and carers. Parents value the approachability of staff and the friendly, family atmosphere. A number of parents spoken to shared their appreciation of initiatives such as the 'family learning projects', which give parents an overview and support an improvement in ethos for learning.

Governance of the school

- Governors are supportive and share in the new ambitious vision for the school. However, they have not always challenged senior leaders sufficiently about the quality of teaching and standards of pupils' performance and attendance. Following the previous inspection, Governors commissioned an independent review of the governing body and have focused on the recommendations to improve their effectiveness.
- Governors have increased their knowledge of what goes on in school through regular visits and have attended training courses to help them understand information about pupils' progress and attainment. Governors now have an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are starting to understand performance data and question and challenge senior leaders more effectively about pupils' outcomes. However, governors are not effectively checking on the use of the pupil premium grant and its effectiveness in improving pupil outcomes. Governors ensure that the statutory requirements for keeping pupils safe are given high importance.

Safeguarding

- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The record of checks made on the suitability of adults to work with children is organised efficiently and maintained accurately. Staff are clear about the procedures to follow if they have a concern about child protection. Training is updated annually and all staff are aware of the changes in the most recent 'Keeping children safe in education' requirements.
- The school takes a proactive approach identifying pupils' needs and works well in collaboration with external agencies to broker support for families in challenging situations. Senior leaders work in partnership with parents to provide awareness sessions on relevant topics such as online safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although teaching has improved over the last academic year, it requires improvement because of its lack of impact, over time, on pupils' attainment and because progress is not yet good across all year groups and subjects.
- Teachers do not consistently assess pupils' learning during lessons. As a result, many pupils spend too long repeating what they already know. Some teachers lack the appropriate subject knowledge to extend pupils' understanding
- Time in lessons is not always used effectively. In some lessons, pupils lose interest and concentration because they are not challenged by their activities.
- Some teachers do not make the best use of assessment information to provide activities at the right level to meet pupils' needs and move their learning on quickly. The most able pupils are not given enough opportunity to learn more rapidly or be extended with further learning. Therefore these pupils do not reach the higher standard and achieve as well as they should.
- Approaches to teaching writing, although not yet good, are developing. Teachers choose texts carefully to enthuse pupils' interest, particularly the boys. For example, in Year 6, pupils were engrossed in writing a descriptive scene for the 'King Kong story'. In some classes, pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and respond effectively to teachers' feedback, which results in improvements.
- Teaching of writing is less effective when teachers do not explain fully the language features that pupils need to use to write effectively. Some teachers do not ensure that pupils have successfully learned one skill before moving on. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write at length and practise their writing skills in a range of subjects. As a result, progress in writing has not improved quickly enough.
- The teaching of mathematics is variable. Teachers ensure that pupils develop a range of strategies to improve their number and calculation skills. However, teachers only provide limited opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in solving mathematical problems and extend their ability to reason.
- Reading is taught effectively through small-group sessions. Adults use effective questioning to help pupils think more deeply about characters and plots in fiction texts. Also, in English lesson pupils read whole-class novels, which gives them opportunities to read aloud, access more-challenging text and develop their inference and deduction skills.
- The curriculum in subjects beyond mathematics and English lacks variety. Pupils' books show that although time is spent on different subjects, pupils' skills are not consistently well developed. For example, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their scientific and historical skills.
- In some classes, teachers have strong subject knowledge, give clear explanations and use skilful questions to encourage pupils to explain their thinking and reasoning. As a result, pupils secure learning more quickly in these lessons.

- The teaching of phonics is of high quality, systematic and tailored to pupils' needs. Lessons have a brisk pace, pupils are actively engaged in blending letter sounds and spelling activities and teachers are carefully tuned into assessing pupils' learning.
- Respect and trust underpin the positive relationships developed between adults and pupils. As a result, pupils are eager to learn and generally work hard in lessons.
- The effectiveness of teaching assistants is varied. In some classes, they engage with pupils from the outset of the lesson, have a clear focus and work effectively to support pupils' learning. In others, they give pupils too much help. Consequently, pupils do not develop high levels of independence and resilience.

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 proud of their school and take pride in their work and appearance. Pupils develop positive attributes of resilience and perseverance towards their learning.
- The school is a caring community built on strong relationships. Teachers show respect and courtesy to one another and their pupils. As a result, pupils are happy at St Brigid's. Parents are particularly positive about the care pupils receive.
- Pupils are friendly and polite. They routinely hold doors open without being asked, shake hands and make visitors feel welcome. Pupils enthusiastically spoke to inspectors about their recent residential trip, which they thoroughly enjoyed. They talked fondly about the adventurous sporting activities in which they took part, including fencing and archery.
- Pupils serve and lead within the school community. Older pupils enjoy taking responsibility for the safety of younger pupils at break times and work as play leaders. The school council and pupil leadership team are positive about their role in helping to improve the school. A well-attended breakfast club provides a good, energetic start to the day for some pupils. This gives the school a happy, family atmosphere.
- Pupils feel safe and secure. They shared with inspectors that bullying is very rare and dealt with immediately and fairly by adults should it occur. They are confident to share any worries or concerns they may have with a trusted adult. Pupils had a good understanding of online safety and know not to give their personal details to anybody. They are regularly reminded about road safety through assemblies.

Pupils have a strong moral code and know it is wrong to call people names. The use of racist or homophobic language is uncommon. Pupils show respect and get along well with pupils from different faiths and backgrounds. As one child commented, 'We learn everyone is different but we are part of the same world.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils develop positive attitudes about their learning and most are eager and enthusiastic in lessons. They participate well, contributing their ideas, asking questions and working hard on tasks set. Pupils collaborate well in groups and pairs, sharing ideas and learning from others. However, when teaching is not

challenging and engaging, pupils often lose interest, become disengaged and do not produce their best work.

- The school is an orderly environment and routines are well established. Pupils move sensibly around school, line up quickly and smartly and sit quietly chatting in the dining hall. On the playground, there is a lively buzz of enjoyment. Pupils play happily with each other and show care and consideration. Adults are vigilant, interact well with pupils on the playground and join in with games and activities.
- Attendance is below the national average and persistent absence is high. The school takes swift action in following up unexplained absence and there is an increased emphasis on engaging closely with parents. As a result, attendance is slowly beginning to improve.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils requires improvement because standards of attainment and rates of progress were below the national average in key stages 1 and 2 in 2016.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2016 was below the national average in reading and mathematics and well below the national average in writing.
- Similarly, attainment by the end of Year 6 in 2016 was below the national average for reading and mathematics and significantly below the national average in writing. In 2016, pupils' progress in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average figure whereas their progress in reading and writing was below national average. In this cohort over 50% of the pupils were recognised as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, which reflects the low attainment of this particular group.
- The school's own assessment information shows that pupils are currently doing better than they did last year. An extensive book scrutiny conducted by inspectors confirmed that progress is speeding up. However, progress is not yet consistently good across all year groups. The improved progress has increased the number of pupils working at the expected level in most year groups.
- Pupils now make good progress overall in key stage 1 in all subjects. Currently, in Year 2, attainment data shows that pupils are on track to achieve standards broadly in line with the national average.
- Attainment in phonics has risen rapidly in 2016 to bring it in line with the national average. High-quality teaching in phonics has resulted in this sustained improvement. Pupils heard to read in Years 2 and 3 read with enjoyment, showed a strong knowledge of letter sounds and blends and were developing accuracy and fluency in their reading.
- Although progress is improving in key stage 2, current school data shows that many of the pupils in Year 6 are currently working below the expected level. This is due to a legacy of weak teaching so that there is a lot of ground to be made up. Focused teaching and additional support has been provided to rapidly improve attainment for this cohort. As a result, standards are creeping closer to the level expected for their age.
- Pupils are becoming more confident writers, although the accuracy of writing skills of the older pupils is weaker. Pupils are improving in basic skills in mathematics. They are more aware of different methods of calculations but less confident to apply this to

mathematical problems. Pupils enjoy reading and have good opportunities to read challenging text in lessons. Through guided reading sessions, pupils develop a deeper understanding of text and focus on improving their inference and deduction skills.

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils in 2016 at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average in reading and writing and broadly in line with the national average in mathematics. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 was much lower than that of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The current school data shows that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress in some year groups but this is not consistently good across the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make enough progress. Progress is inconsistent because of variation in the support that these pupils receive. Provision is does not always targeted to their specific needs. Leadership has identified this and their needs are now being identified more promptly and this is helping them to make better progress.
- Very few pupils attained the higher levels, because teaching does not sufficiently challenge the most able pupils. The current progress of the most-able pupils fluctuates across the school. In classes where teaching is strong they make good progress, but where teaching is weaker their progress is slow.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter school with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age. Most children make good progress, and by the end of the early years the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is broadly in line with the national average. The spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has provided good progress. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the transition into Year 1.
- Teaching is good. Sessions led by adults include clear explanations and skilful questioning to probe and develop children's thinking. Activities are exciting, creative and capture children's imagination. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and learning. They use praise and encouragement effectively to promote learning. However, teachers do not always challenge the most able children effectively. As a result, this group of children do not always make the best possible progress.
- The early years environment is vibrant, stimulating and well resourced. There is a broad range of interesting and demanding experiences, particularly in the outdoor area. Children enjoy building, digging, painting, running and discovering objects in the water and sand pit. Children feel settled and show a high level of engagement and imagination in their own constructive play.
- The leadership of early years is effective. The leader is a committed, dedicated and passionate teacher. Assessment is used successfully to gain a thorough and accurate assessment of achievement on entry. Regular reviews of progress ensure that any underachievement is picked up and additional support is provided for children. Daily assessment is generally used well to identify next steps and inform teachers' planning.
- The behaviour of children is good. Children are motivated, confident and active learners. They learn to follow instructions and understand daily routines. Children are cooperative,

take turns and work and play well with others. Relationships are strong between children and adults. The early years setting is a happy, safe and harmonious environment.

- Safeguarding practices are strong and the statutory welfare requirements are fully met. Positive relationships are rapidly established with parents. They are kept well informed through frequent meetings, workshops and opportunities to visit school.

School details

Unique reference number	104474
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10026826

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father David Potter
Headteacher	Mrs Rachael Tyler
Telephone number	0151 477 8150
Website	http://stbrigid.knowsley.sch.uk
Email address	stbrigid@knowsley.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 March 2015

Information about this school

- This school is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is double the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average and of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a variety of lessons in all year groups in the school.
- Inspectors heard some pupils read.
- A scrutiny of pupils' work in books was undertaken jointly by the inspection team and school leaders.
- Inspectors observed movement around school and at lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- There were no pupil responses to the online questionnaire. However, inspectors spoke to a group of pupils about what it is like to be a pupil at the school and also spoke to pupils during lessons.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, governors and local authority and archdiocesan representatives.
- Inspectors spoke with parents before and after school and took account of the 11 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Inspectors analysed published data and the school's information to determine the progress that pupils are currently making across the school.
- Inspectors considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and also took account of staff views during informal discussions.
- Inspectors evaluated key documents, including: school self-evaluation, school improvement plans, safeguarding policies and case files, performance management records, behaviour logs, attendance records and minutes of governor meetings.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Moira Atkins

Ofsted Inspector

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