

St. John's Catholic Primary School

Berry Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 7HG

Inspection dates	8–9 March 2016
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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved significantly since the last inspection because the executive headteacher and head of school are providing strong leadership, especially of teaching and learning. The school is well placed to develop further.
- Senior leaders, other leaders and the governing body are providing good support in improving teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully, as well as their physical well-being.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and teaching is now good.
- Teachers are making good use of robust systems for assessing pupils' achievements in English and mathematics. Their good subject knowledge and effective questioning enable pupils to acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills quickly.
- Children in the Reception class are now making good progress in the early years as a result of good teaching and good leadership. This is leading to clear improvement in the proportion of children who are set to reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They enjoy school, their attendance is above average and they are punctual to lessons. Good pastoral support promotes pupils' personal development and welfare effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not consistently implement the school's policy to ensure that all pupils respond to the advice given when their books are marked.
- Children in the early years are sometimes given insufficient guidance, so that they are not confident about what they need to do.
- Tasks are sometimes too hard for lower attaining pupils, or too easy for higher attainers.
- Other than in English and mathematics, subject leaders have not fully developed systems to track and record pupils' attainment and progress within their subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in order to raise pupils' achievement by making sure that:
 - teachers check that pupils are responding to the advice they are given when their books are marked, in line with the school's policy
 - children in the early years receive guidance and examples of how to develop their learning so that they can proceed with confidence
 - pupils are given learning tasks which are neither too hard nor too easy, by recognising their different levels of prior attainment
 - subject leaders develop robust systems, across the subjects of the curriculum, for recording and tracking pupils' attainment and progress within their subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The head of school and executive headteacher have clear ambitions for the school and have successfully raised the expectations of staff, pupils and parents. They receive good support from senior leaders and governors in creating an environment in which pupils can flourish. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and staff morale is high.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and are setting the right priorities for development. They work successfully together to continually improve teaching, learning and pupils' achievement.
- Senior leaders rigorously monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement to identify strengths and tackle weaknesses through support and coaching. They have implemented a detailed monitoring and evaluation schedule and they provide good opportunities for staff training to improve their practice. They have acted swiftly to tackle any underperformance.
- Leaders have set ambitious targets for the progress they expect pupils to make. They have robust systems for tracking their progress in reading, writing and mathematics, identifying where groups or individuals need extra help or where aspects of provision could be improved.
- Leaders make good use of information about pupils' progress to identify where improvements could be made and to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities. They tackle any form of harassment or discrimination well by promoting good relationships throughout the school.
- Teachers with responsibility for leading the early years, mathematics and English are making a good contribution to school improvement. However, leaders of other subjects, while supporting the work of the school in driving improvement, have yet to develop robust systems for assessment within their subjects.
- The school has benefited from very good support from the local authority, teaching and learning advisers and the local education improvement partner school.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and relevant to the needs of its pupils as it places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' communication, language, literacy and numeracy skills. The topic-based curriculum is supplemented by a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, activities and special events such as street dancing, World Book Day and Science Week.
- The Catholic life of the school successfully supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school promotes British values, as seen in displays in all classrooms and around the corridors.
- The school makes good use of its pupil premium funding to provide a variety of interventions, including one-to-one support to narrow the gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.
- Leaders use the primary physical education and sports funding effectively to promote pupils' well-being and physical development. Staff work alongside sports coaches to develop their teaching skills. There has been a significant increase in pupils' participation in sports, including competitions with other schools, and in the range of lunchtime and after-school sports clubs such as Gaelic football, tag-rugby, football and hockey.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body has been strengthened since the last inspection and governors are now bringing more expertise to their role. They visit the school regularly to check on how well the school is improving against its development plan priorities and to hold leaders to account for their work.
 - Governors have ensured that the school uses robust systems for managing the performance of teachers so that good teaching is recognised and weaknesses are tackled. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning.
 - Governors oversee the successful promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values, ensuring these are reflected in the ethos of the school.
 - Governors are making sure that safeguarding meets requirements, that regular health and safety checks are carried out and that policies are up to date.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and child protection, robust procedures are in place and the school works well with parents and outside agencies to ensure pupils' safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved significantly since the previous inspection when it required improvement. The rapid increase in pupils' rate of progress, the work in pupils' books and the school's monitoring records show that teaching and learning are now good.
- Teachers have established a very positive atmosphere for learning in their classrooms. A culture of celebrating achievement is seen with many displays of pupils' work and various awards such as 'Writer of the Week', 'Mathematician of the Week', 'Star of the Week' and 'Violinist of the Week'.
- Teachers use effective questioning based on their good subject knowledge to probe and deepen pupils' thinking, prompting pupils to give detailed explanations of their work. As a result, pupils remain focused on learning and rapidly gain new knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who need to catch up quickly, disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs, and pupils who speak English as an additional language. They carefully explain the tasks that pupils are given to address any misunderstandings. Teachers make sure that teaching assistants are clear about their role in supporting pupils' learning.
- The teaching of basic skills in reading and writing is good. Teachers provide interesting tasks, such as writing for different purposes and exploring a variety of texts, while consolidating their use of English grammar, punctuation and spelling. English is also promoted across different subjects through extended writing.
- In mathematics, teachers ask good open-ended questions and provide pupils with problem-solving activities to deepen their understanding.
- The planning of lessons across all year groups has improved and teachers usually draw on what pupils have learned previously to build on their skills, knowledge and understanding. Occasionally, however, pupils are given tasks which are too easy or too difficult and this slows their progress.
- Good teaching in the early years enables children in the Reception class to learn effectively and make good progress, although occasionally children are not given enough examples to consolidate their learning, for example in understanding how to correctly write a number.
- The school has developed effective assessment systems for reading, writing and mathematics and teachers' assessments in these subjects are accurate. There are robust procedures within the school and with other schools to compare assessments with those of other teachers. Teachers follow the school's marking policy to inform pupils about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve; but less consistently so in checking that pupils have responded to their good advice and guidance with amendments or corrections.
- The school is in the process of developing assessment systems for subjects across the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils know that it is important to concentrate and work hard in lessons, to follow instructions and pay attention. They maintain good relationships with one another, treating others with respect and listening to their views. Pupils are polite, courteous and helpful to visitors.
- Good pastoral support, particularly through 'learning mentors', enables pupils to be reflective and solve any potential problems peacefully.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They talked about how well the school celebrated their work in assembly and through displays in classrooms, which motivates them to do their best. Their books show that their work is neat and tidy and they take a pride in how well it is presented.
- The school successfully supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and helps them to develop their understanding of British values. In discussion, pupils spoke about the personal values of respect, tolerance, honesty, truth and kindness towards others, which the school promotes well through its Catholic Christian ethos. They know about the law and the importance of school rules in helping them to make the right choices to avoid hurting others. Pupils in Year 6 spoke sensitively about the importance of celebrating and respecting other faiths and cultural traditions. They have many opportunities for reflection in assemblies, in lessons and in the prayer garden.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and is usually dealt with effectively should it occur; nearly all parents and staff

agree. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and how to use the internet safely.

- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that staff deal with any concerns they may have. Pupils use equipment safely, play safely in the playground and move safely from one area of the school to another.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' conduct around the school and in lessons is good. Staff maintain a calm and orderly environment and disruption of any kind in lessons is rare.
- The school has strengthened its management of pupils' behaviour since the last inspection with the introduction of a staged system for dealing with incidents of unacceptable behaviour, together with systems for praising pupils' efforts. These are highly valued by the pupils.
- Parents' responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and discussions with those who attended parents evening, show that they are positive about the way the school has improved pupils' behaviour and how effective the rewards system is now. They said that their children want to do well in school and value the system of rewards.
- The school tackles persistent absence very well and, as a result, attendance has risen steadily since the previous inspection and is above average. Pupils are punctual to lessons and well prepared for learning.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement is continuously improving and is now good because the school is working successfully to raise standards. Work in pupils' books, information from the school's systems for tracking their progress and their work in lessons shows that they are making good progress and filling gaps in their learning in English and mathematics. The school is ensuring pupils are well prepared for secondary education.
- Pupils are also making good progress across a range of other subjects such as science, physical education, music, computing and religious education. Pupils in Year 6 were proud to show and talk about their work, which showed the rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding they had made in these subjects as a result of good teaching.
- Children in the Reception Year are now making good progress from their starting points, which are broadly typical on entry to the early years. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has more than doubled, showing that children made at least expected progress. The school's accurate tracking information shows that most of these children made better than expected progress across all areas of learning. Currently, children's skills are least in line with those typically found for their ages across all areas of learning.
- Improved methods of teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make), reading and writing have led to significant improvements in Reception and Year 1. This is reflected in a significant rise in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics test: from below the national average at the time of the last inspection, to broadly average in 2015. Reading records and the school's accurate information about their progress show that current pupils are working above expectations for their age.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were significantly above average in 2015 in reading, writing and mathematics, with a steady year-on-year rise in attainment since the previous inspection. Nearly all pupils made at least expected progress and the majority made more than expected progress. The school's data show that they are on track to make at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are no significant differences in the progress made by boys and girls.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 also showed significant improvement since the previous inspection, with a year-on-year rise in test results. Pupils' attainment was significantly above average for all subjects in 2014 and 2015, showing that they had made rapid progress. The school's tracking information shows that current pupils at Key Stage 2 are also making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The progress made by different groups of pupils from their various starting points is equally good. Disadvantaged pupils attained as well as their classmates and other pupils nationally across all subjects in 2015, with the gap steadily closing between these pupils and their peers since the previous inspection. Disadvantaged pupils are currently making good progress in response to effectively targeted support.
- Other groups of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, those of minority ethnic backgrounds and those who need to catch up quickly are making equally good progress as their classmates.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are generally making good progress although,

occasionally, they find learning too difficult when they are given tasks which are too challenging.

- The most-able pupils are making at least the expected progress. However, on occasion, teachers do not challenge them to think deeply or to move on quickly to harder work once they have demonstrated their understanding, which slows their progress.

Early years provision

is good

- Good leadership has ensured good improvement since the last inspection. Staff work more closely with parents to support their children's learning. Parents are now beginning to use the new system of tracking and recording the progress their children are making. There has been a significant rise in children's attainment, with an above-average proportion of children achieving a good level of development and a higher proportion achieving at least expected progress in each area of learning in 2015.
- As a result of good leadership and good teaching and learning in the Reception class, with an improved system for tracking children's development in small steps, children are now making good progress. Children in Reception are being well prepared for Year 1.
- Staff work well together as a team and know their children well. They provide carefully targeted support for those children who need extra help with their learning, making good use of additional funding to narrow the gaps for disadvantaged children.
- Children's behaviour and their attitude to learning in the Reception class are good. During the inspection, children were very eager to conduct their mathematical surveys of favourite fruits and record their findings on a tally chart, for example. Occasionally, children do not benefit from clear guidance and examples of how to consolidate their learning, which limits their progress.
- Children stay safe because staff pay careful attention to their welfare. They make good progress in their personal development and learning to share, take turns, listen and respect the views of other children.

School details

Unique reference number	117475
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10001918

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Beaton
Headteacher	Tony Hall (head of school) and Peter Sweeney (executive headteacher)
Telephone number	01923 774004
Website	http://www.stjohns705.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stjohns705.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 December 2013

Information about this school

- St. John's Catholic Primary is smaller than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, the school received two monitoring visits by Ofsted to determine how much progress it was making in meeting its areas for improvement. There have been changes of headteacher and a significant turnover of staff. In September 2015, an executive headteacher, who leads St. Joan of Arc Catholic School, was appointed to a part-time leadership role and the deputy headteacher was appointed as the new head of school. The schools have formed a soft federation together. The school works closely with a local education improvement partner school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a wide variety of lessons and activities, nearly all of them jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work in different subjects across all year groups and heard a few pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at data and the school's tracking information to check the progress pupils are making across the school, including the progress of children in the early years.
- Inspectors considered the 92 parental responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, a few written responses from parents and held informal discussions with parents during parents evening. They also looked at the responses of staff in their completed questionnaires.
- Inspectors held meetings with three members of the governing body, school leaders, a representative of the local authority and two groups of pupils. They also held informal discussions with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation including: minutes of governing body meetings; the school's evaluation of its work and the school improvement plan; safeguarding policies and procedures; records of behaviour and attendance figures.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

Keith Pullen

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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