

St Anne's Catholic Primary School

Monastery Lane, Sutton, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 3SP

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2018

| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement |
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| 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 | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The education provided by the school has weakened since the last inspection.
- Leaders and governors were slow to react to early signs of decline. However, a new leadership team has begun to address the underlying issues that led to the deterioration in the school's performance.
- Teaching has not been strong enough over time. Consequently, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills.
- While pupils currently in the school are catching up, the quality of teaching, particularly in writing and mathematics, remains variable. This limits the progress that some pupils make.
- Some subject leaders' roles are still developing. Too much of the drive for improvement rests with senior leaders.
- Although improving, disadvantaged pupils are not consistently making the strong progress needed to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- The quality of education in early years has declined since the last inspection. However, the current early years leader has quickly identified what needs to be done to tackle weaknesses.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are not consistently high. Some work set is too easy. At times, teachers do not move learning on quickly enough once new concepts have been grasped.
- Monitoring of pupils' learning and progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is at an early stage.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher is driving improvements effectively. This is leading to higher quality teaching and increasingly accurate assessment.
- Governance is effective. Changes made to the governing body have strengthened the support and challenge provided by governors.
- Progress rates improved in 2018 where teaching was strongest.
- This is a caring school that strongly promotes pupils' welfare and personal development. Pupils behave well, enjoy school and feel safe.
- Leaders and governors hold an accurate view of the school's performance. Actions taken are bringing about improvements, but there has not been enough time to see the full impact on pupils' learning.
- The curriculum engages pupils' interests well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to make sure that pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, make the best possible progress, by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve
 - set work at the right level of challenge to deepen pupils' learning and develop independence in learning, particularly in writing and mathematics
 - move learning on quickly once the concepts being taught have been grasped
 - develop pupils' skills, creativity and resilience as writers when they write independently and at length
 - identify and eradicate gaps in pupils' learning caused by earlier weaknesses in teaching.
- Improve the impact of leaders' actions, by:
 - continuing to improve the monitoring of pupils' learning and progress, including in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - developing the skills of subject leaders to enable them to contribute fully to improving the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is deployed effectively to improve the achievement of this group
 - continuing to provide opportunities for staff to learn from the best practice that exists in the school.
- Improve early years provision to ensure that a good proportion of children are ready for Year 1, by:
 - providing children with more opportunities to solve problems and work things out for themselves
 - developing adults' use of questioning to tease out and extend children's understanding
 - ensuring that teachers regularly plan high-quality and challenging learning opportunities that match children's interests, and develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills when they learn with an adult and when they work and play independently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders and managers have not secured consistently good-quality teaching, learning and assessment across the school. As a result, too few pupils make good progress.
- The headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, governors and staff share a clear determination to raise standards and sharpen all aspects of school life. Senior leaders and governors are knowledgeable and honest in their understanding of what the school does well and where further improvement is needed.
- Leaders' plans for the improvement of the school are precise. They reflect the urgent pace of change taking place. As a result of the wide range of actions undertaken by leaders and staff following the headteacher's appointment, the quality of education is improving. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 is rising. However, there is more to do as some variability in the quality of teaching remains and pupils' progress is not consistently good across the school.
- Senior leaders' checks on teaching are accurate and precisely identify the aspects that need improvement. Carefully targeted training and support are bringing about improvements, for example in teachers' subject knowledge. All teachers are held fully to account for the progress of pupils in their care.
- Senior and middle leaders have improved the accuracy of reading, writing and mathematics assessments and the way that they monitor pupils' progress in these subjects. The monitoring of pupils' learning and progress in other subjects is at an early stage of development.
- The leaders of mathematics and English are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Links with other schools have been strengthened recently. Partnerships created with the schools in a teaching alliance and local cluster of schools have led to ongoing improvements in the reliability of assessments. Leadership of other subject areas is developing. All subject leaders are passionate about their roles, but there has not been time for them to develop all the skills necessary to support colleagues in their areas of responsibility.
- St Anne's is a nurturing school. The pastoral team provides effective support for all pupils, including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. Parents who spoke to inspectors and those who responded to the Ofsted Parent View survey were overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Parents said that staff make them feel welcome at the school.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is proving increasingly effective. A careful review of pupils who need additional support has helped the school to target the additional funding on the right pupils. School leaders work well with partner agencies to give prompt and relevant support for individual pupils. Parents whose children have received help from the school, including foster parents and guardians of children in the care of the local authority, commented very positively on the difference that this has made to their children's progress.
- Senior leaders are using the pupil premium well to support the personal, social and emotional development of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the attendance of these

pupils has improved and is now in line with the national average. However, this funding is not used well enough to make sure that disadvantaged pupils achieve as successfully as other pupils nationally.

- The curriculum, which is taught in a series of topics, is enriched by a range of trips and extra activities. Currently, the curriculum is being redesigned to ensure full coverage of all subjects and to take full account of pupils' needs and interests. The headteacher has launched 'the big democracy' debate, where pupils' views take centre stage in the creation of the school's new curriculum. Pupils were keen to tell inspectors how excited they are to be involved in this process.
- Leaders make sure that pupils learn about the many aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and about life in modern Britain. Pupils learn to respect diversity, for example about people's different abilities and backgrounds.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used well. Specialist coaches help pupils to develop new skills. They also develop the expertise of teachers. As a result, more pupils are participating in sports activities at lunchtimes and after school.
- The headteacher holds a series of regular forums to keep parents informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Parents who spoke to inspectors described how these sessions enable parents to question leaders about the direction in which the school is moving. Many parents consider that the quality of information provided by teachers about how well their children are doing academically has improved recently.
- St Anne's was identified by the local authority as requiring additional help in the summer term of 2017. The school was supported by an executive headteacher for two days a week during the autumn and spring terms in the last academic year.
- A number of external consultants have also supported the school since September 2017. The school is now less reliant on this external support than it was previously. The leaders for English and mathematics, for example, are successfully supporting colleagues in sharing effective practice to bring about improvements in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics.

Governance of the school

- The governing body did not act promptly enough to recognise and halt the decline in the school's performance that became evident to governors in July 2017.
- Since that time, governors have worked closely with the local authority and archdiocese staff to source new members for the governing body and to provide interim headteacher support for the school following the resignation of the previous post holder.
- Governors organised an external review of their work when the decline in the school's performance became clear to them. The outcomes of this review have been used to deploy governors' skills well and to reorganise and strengthen the way that they hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance.
- The governing body now provides effective challenge and support for school leaders. Governors know their roles and responsibilities well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what needs further improvement, and share the new

headteacher's ambition for the school. They fully support the values and ethos established. Governors take a keen interest in all aspects of the school's work. Minutes of governing body meetings show that they receive comprehensive and accurate information about pupils' outcomes from the headteacher and other leaders. They ask challenging questions and receive comprehensive responses from school leaders.

- Governors regularly visit the school to gain first-hand views of school life. For example, governors recently observed the meetings that senior leaders held with teachers to review the progress made by pupils.
- The governing body checks carefully on the spending of additional funding, including the pupil premium and funding for pupils with SEND. They understand the impact of the spending decisions on the personal development and achievement of disadvantaged pupils. However, they have not ensured that these pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Governors valued the external support brokered by the local authority and archdiocese once the decline in the school's performance became clear to the governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Improvement plans produced when the local authority increased its checks on the school indicate that much has been done since that time to overhaul safeguarding procedures, systems and record keeping.
- Appropriate checks are made on staff before they start employment, and visitors to the school are informed about safeguarding arrangements on arrival. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies and parents to ensure that pupils are supported and safe.
- The curriculum is adapted well to develop pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and deal with risks that they may face.
- The link governor for safeguarding keeps a careful check on the way that staff protect pupils. She makes sure that other governors are informed of her findings. Governors check the safety of the school premises regularly and thoroughly. The culture of safeguarding is now strong. Staff and governors are highly vigilant in keeping pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Over time, leaders did not check well enough on the quality of teaching or the accuracy of teachers' assessments of how well pupils were doing. This negatively affected the quality of pupils' learning across the school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now improving because of the determined work of leaders and staff. Leaders' actions to improve weaker teaching are bearing fruit and pupils are making stronger progress in their learning as a result.
- Pupils told inspectors that some of their most enjoyable mathematics learning takes place at the start of lessons when teachers use 'hooks' or 'challenges' to make them

think about the learning that will take place. Teachers often use careful questioning to probe and challenge pupils to think deeply about their answers. However, work in pupils' books shows that, at times, other learning lacks challenge and does not always move on quickly enough once the tasks set have been completed or concepts have been grasped.

- The teaching of writing varies. Although some teaching is exciting and inspires pupils to write thoughtfully and skilfully, this is inconsistent. Sometimes, tasks are too basic and do not demand enough of pupils. For example, pupils are sometimes asked to choose their own words to complete a limited number of sentences provided for them rather than writing meaningful sentences of their own. In some classes, pupils spend time copying out sentences written in previous lessons rather than using the skills taught earlier to write independently and at length. This hampers pupils' progress and does not follow the school's own assessment policy.
- Fewer inconsistencies exist in the teaching of reading and pupils' progress is improving as a result. However, gaps in pupils' earlier learning still remain, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, and this prevents some of these pupils from reaching the standards expected for their age. Teachers and teaching assistants use good subject knowledge to teach pupils the sounds that letters represent. Staff engage and enthuse pupils with a range of stories and non-fiction texts, and pupils are becoming increasingly fluent and enthusiastic readers.
- Teaching assistants play a valued role in helping different groups of pupils to learn. They make a good contribution to supporting pupils with SEND.
- Teachers have created classroom environments that are bright and stimulating. Staff celebrate pupils' work positively in class and in displays throughout the school. At the time of the inspection, the walls in the corridors throughout the school proudly displayed the poppies that all pupils had created as part of their commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War.
- Pupils' work shows that teachers plan and deliver a broad and interesting curriculum. However, not all staff have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly those pupils who are disadvantaged. This accounts for pupils making less than good progress in different subjects and classes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' personal development is well supported because adults know the pupils well. Pupils speak highly of the support that they receive from staff. They report that it helps them to solve problems that they may have, both in school and at home. The needs of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable are met very well. All staff are highly attentive to the needs of pupils who are in the care of the local authority.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school and are keen to contribute to its success. They take their responsibilities seriously, including those who act as school councillors, who feel that their views and suggestions are taken seriously by school leaders.

- Pupils say that they feel safe. Incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly when reported to staff. Pupils have a very good understanding of the different types of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying. Pupils recognise that everyone is different but equal and pupils of all ages are adamant that all are welcome at St Anne's.
- Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles. They understand the benefits of making healthy food choices and the positive impact of keeping active through regular exercise.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about a wide range of safeguarding issues, including using modern technology safely. They know how to keep safe and learn to manage risks that may face them in their local community.
- Breakfast club gets the day off to a good start. The after-school club is considered a valuable resource by parents and is enjoyed by pupils of different ages.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They listen carefully to adults and each other. They respond quickly when teachers or teaching assistants require their attention and show great respect for the views of others.
- Pupils generally move around school in an orderly manner. Playtimes are happy occasions. Pupils of different ages get on well together.
- School rules and rewards systems are well understood by all and pupils think the adults apply these fairly. Pupils say that the school motto, 'Learn to Love, Love to Learn,' sums up their school.
- Pupils concentrate well when teachers explain new work to them and when they talk about their work in small groups. On occasion, however, pupils' attention drifts when they have completed their work and they are waiting to find out what they are to do next. Sometimes, pupils do not expect enough of themselves: they could achieve more when they work independently.
- Pupils enjoy school. They look smart in their uniforms and most attend school regularly and on time.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes are not as strong as those seen at the time of the last inspection. This is because of weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics dipped significantly to well below the national average. Progress was in the bottom 10% of all schools nationally for these three subjects.
- The new headteacher's drive to improve teaching brought about some improvements in 2018. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics across key stages 1 and 2 classes was stronger than the low levels seen in the previous year, and standards

improved. Nevertheless, progress was not fast enough to overcome the gaps in learning caused by previous weaknesses in teaching.

- The progress of pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 in 2018 remained well below average. Standards were closer to the national average than in 2017, particularly in reading. However, there was too much ground for this year group to make up during their final year in school for pupils to reach their full potential.
- The school's assessment information and work in pupils' books show that current pupils are making more rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics than they have previously.
- Pupils who are working on the early learning goals in Year 1 are catching up quickly because of well-planned provision.
- Funding to support disadvantaged pupils is beginning to make a difference to their learning. These pupils are making better progress, and standards are beginning to rise from some of the very low levels seen since the last inspection. However, pupils' attainment still lags behind that of other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Following a number of years of weaker outcomes, standards at the end of key stage 1 improved to be broadly in line with the national average in all subjects in 2018.
- The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check are broadly in line with the national average each year.
- Pupils with SEND, including those who are disadvantaged, now make stronger progress across the school. This is because staff and leaders focus on adapting support to meet pupils' individual needs.
- Science books and the school's own assessment information show that standards in science are beginning to improve, most strongly in key stage 1.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, children's outcomes at the end of Reception have declined.
- The large majority of children enter early years with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. Most children make typical progress in most areas of learning. However, progress has not been good enough in children's reading, writing and mathematical development for some time.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2017 was below the national average, as it had been in recent years. In 2018, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics dipped again and were well below national figures. This means that over time, children, including those who are disadvantaged, are not consistently well prepared for the challenges of key stage 1.
- The headteacher and governors had clear plans in place to improve the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in 2018. However, throughout the year, the setting experienced significant turbulence in staffing, including to the leadership of the provision. All of this hampered the impact of leaders' actions to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching.

- Since September, the acting deputy headteacher has taken on responsibility for early years. He is quickly getting up to speed and has grasped what needs to be done to secure better outcomes for all children.
- Teaching requires improvement. Early reading, writing and mathematics activities sometimes lack challenge in adult-led sessions. Teachers do not always build on children's prior learning in reading, writing and mathematics. At times, children do not have enough opportunities to practise their skills in these subjects when they play and learn independently.
- Adult interventions are not always timely in supporting better learning. There are times when adults do not provide children with enough opportunities to solve problems and find things out for themselves. There are also times when questioning by adults is not as probing as it might be. Opportunities to develop children's thinking and deepen their understanding are sometimes missed. As a result, progress is not as good as it could be.
- Staff plan role-play activities effectively to promote the development of speaking and listening and social interaction skills. The children in Reception enjoyed recreating the campfire they had used when they had spent time in the forest school earlier in the week. They gathered wood and other objects to make their 'fire' and set the cooking pot on the tripod as they talked to each other about the camp fire rules that they knew would keep them safe.
- Children show good levels of concentration. During the inspection, a number of children were learning to handle scissors. Guided by an adult, who watched carefully and encouraged the correct grip, children were delighted with their success in managing the tricky business of cutting round shapes with scissors.
- Relationships between staff and children are positive and children are safe and well cared for. Children behave and play together happily. They are polite, and take turns and help each other. Children settle into school life well because of well-established routines and the nurturing support they receive. Parents are extremely positive about the start their children make at school. Welfare requirements are met well and behaviour is good.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 104805 |
| Local authority | St Helens |
| Inspection number | 10082044 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 303 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Carmel Foster |
| Headteacher | Rachel Crolla |
| Telephone number | 01744 671909 |
| Website | www.stannessutton.co.uk |
| Email address | stannesrc@sthelens.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 19–20 November 2014 |

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- Most children in Nursery attend in the morning. A few children access wraparound care provision and attend for the full day. Children attend Reception full time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is declining but remains above average overall.
- The school provides before- and after-school clubs for its pupils.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced staffing turbulence. A number of teachers, including members of the leadership team, left the school during the last academic year. A temporary head of school, who was appointed in September 2017, subsequently became the substantive headteacher in April 2018. An executive headteacher from St Theresa’s Catholic Primary School provided part-time support for

the school in the autumn term of 2017 and the spring term of 2018. An acting deputy headteacher joined the school on secondment in September 2018. The early years has experienced several changes in leadership in the last two years. The leader of provision for pupils with SEND took up post in September 2017. A new leadership structure was introduced in September 2018.

- Three new members joined the governing body in September 2017.
- St Helens local authority and the archdiocese brokered support for the school during the last academic year.
- A section 48 inspection took place in October 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. Learning was observed in all classes and when pupils learned in small groups. Inspectors made joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors checked the safety of the school premises at different times of the school day. They observed arrangements for pupils' arrival at school.
- The inspectors talked with pupils informally as they played at breaktimes. They visited the dining hall at lunchtime and observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. They met formally with three groups of pupils, including three pupils who showed an inspector around the school.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about it. They listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills. Pupils talked to inspectors about the books they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with the headteacher to consider her review of the school and the school's plan for improvement. Inspectors spoke with senior leaders and met with middle and subject leaders and other members of the school's staff.
- An inspector met with the chair of governors and a vice-chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- An inspector met with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the archdiocese.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of 27 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) and 11 comments provided for inspectors. Inspectors also took account of 23 responses to the staff questionnaire and of the school's most recent surveys of pupils' and parents' views.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including information about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, school improvement plans, and external views of the school. They reviewed the contents of the school's website and scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding completed by school staff.

Inspection team

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|----------------------------|------------------|
| Lyn Pender, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Karen Bramwell | Ofsted Inspector |
| Michelle Joyce | Ofsted Inspector |

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