

St John's Church of England Primary School

Rufford Road, Crossens, Southport, Merseyside PR9 8JH

Inspection dates	22–23 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

- Building on the good work of the previous headteacher, the efficient and well-organised headteacher and senior leaders have taken this school from strength to strength. Together with teachers, governors, parents and the church, they have ensured that the quality of teaching, and pupils' achievement, have improved since the previous inspection.
- Governors are highly visible and well known by members of the school community, including pupils and staff. They challenge and support the school in equal measure.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly effective. They know pupils well and have high expectations of them. Teachers' good subject knowledge and well developed skills ensure that pupils make good progress across the school.
- Pupils benefit from a stimulating curriculum which captures their interest and ensures that they enjoy learning. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. They are excellent communicators, welcoming and respectful towards each other and adults.
- By the time pupils left school at the end of Year 6 in 2015, the overwhelming majority made good and often outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Academic standards have improved each year for the last five years. At the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2015, overall standards attained by pupils were in line with those found nationally.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and say that their children are safe and well cared for. Parents say that, 'The school has a wonderful family atmosphere' and 'Staff are always ready to help and make sure that our children achieve to their very best.'
- All aspects of the leadership and management of the early years provision, including the quality of teaching and children's progress, are good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Too few opportunities are available for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Teachers' feedback does not always indicate to pupils how they can improve their learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school, including in the early years, by:
 - providing as many opportunities as possible for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across all subject
 - ensuring that teachers give pupils clear and consistently good advice on how they can improve their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The school is well led and managed by a very capable headteacher who leaves nothing to chance. With the full support of senior leaders and governors, and despite several staffing changes during his short tenure, the headteacher ensures that the school continually moves on an upward trajectory. This is reflected in pupils' good, and often outstanding, progress across the school, and in the quality of teaching, both of which are greatly improved since the previous inspection.
- Subject leaders, including those responsible for English and mathematics, and those responsible for monitoring the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, play a full role in improving the quality of teaching and learning. They are trained well, regularly scrutinise performance information, monitor teaching and marking, and talk to pupils about their learning. This information provides them with a good overview of the quality of teaching and learning, and enables them to produce precise plans which help to continually improve standards across the school in all subjects.
- All teachers who spoke to inspectors said that many opportunities are available for them to develop their teaching practice and subject knowledge, and to develop their skills and knowledge in working with children with special educational needs or disabilities. Teachers are especially appreciative of the many opportunities available for them to learn from good and outstanding teaching practice from within their local cluster of schools.
- Senior leaders and governors ensure that disadvantaged pupils can participate in all aspects of school life. Very effective specialist support, targeted small-group teaching activities and one-to-one reading, writing and mathematics sessions ensure that any pupils who fall behind soon catch up with their peers. Due to this comprehensive support, disadvantaged pupils make at least the same good and outstanding progress as their peers in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Pupils benefit from a carefully designed and interesting curriculum, which promotes their reading and mathematical skills exceptionally well across the all subjects. Work to promote pupils' writing skills is not quite as good. Senior leaders are aware of this and have made it a priority to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across all subjects. High numbers of pupils regularly participate in a range of extra-curricular activities such as the 'Hola' Spanish club and gardening, philosophy and book clubs.
- Senior leaders help develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils enjoy visiting various places of worship, including local churches, and have visited a Hindu temple and synagogue. Pupils regularly visit local care homes to celebrate Easter, Christingle services and the Harvest Festival. They have made 'memory boxes' to help elderly dementia sufferers recall their early memories.
- Pupils have raised money for 'Sport Relief' and 'Children In Need', and have sent sports kit and equipment to developing countries. Recently pupils raised money to buy a cow, as part of an initiative coordinated by the Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool, to support farming developments in different African countries. Pupils enjoy playing various brass and string instruments, visiting museums and theatres, and have a good appreciation of the visual and performing arts.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of British values, particularly in relation to their democratic rights. They are excellent ambassadors for the school and understand the importance of fairness. They regularly write letters of application for the many positions of responsibility available to them in school.
- The primary school sports fund is matched with other funding and used highly effectively in a number of ways. For example, funding has improved pupils' participation in various competitive sports such as hockey and basketball. The school purchases a 'package of support' from the local high school which helps to widen the range of sporting opportunities available to pupils. Funding also develops staff skills in delivering high-quality physical education classes in gymnastics, yoga and netball.
- Parents are exceptionally positive about all aspects of this cohesive and welcoming school. They are of the view that teaching and their children's progress are good, and much improved under the current headteacher. Parents are highly complimentary about their children's social, emotional and academic development. They know that they can contact the school at any time and say that staff are 'visible' every morning and 'highly approachable'.
- The school has a strong and productive relationship with the local authority school improvement advisor. Most recently, support has been brokered to further improve the quality of teaching in English and mathematics, to develop the skills of middle leaders and to recruit new staff.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors are trained well and have a good knowledge of the school’s strengths and areas for development. They come into school regularly to talk to pupils, and meet and greet parents at the school gate in the morning.
 - Governors know that the quality of teaching and learning is good, because they receive regular reports from senior leaders and have a good understanding of school assessment information and national performance data. In addition to this, they look at work in pupils’ books and talk to them about their learning.
 - Governors say that ‘The school is not the finished article’ and are fully aware that there is work to be done to improve pupils’ attainment further. They have made it a priority to improve writing, and to ensure that teachers and leaders receive effective training in order to secure good outcomes in this area. Governors are provided with detailed information on teachers’ performance. This puts them in an excellent position to decide whether or not teachers are to be rewarded for their work with pay progression.
 - Governors know that those eligible for additional support through the pupil premium are performing well. However, they intend to continue to monitor how such funding is spent and aim to ensure that any gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are eliminated.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding procedures throughout the school, including in the early years, are stringent. All members of staff, including those new to the school, know exactly what to do in the event of any pupil disclosing a concern about their welfare or safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Expectations are consistently high throughout the school in all subjects. Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils very well. They plan activities that are stimulating and engaging and deepen pupils’ understanding. As a result, pupils learn exceptionally well and make good and often outstanding progress across the school.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They insist that pupils use the correct grammar, punctuation and spelling in their written work and encourage them to use adventurous language in their discussions. This was exemplified in a Year 5 class where pupils enhanced their good use of the English language because their teacher encouraged them to use interesting and complex language in their evaluations of each other’s work. Pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of, for example, rhetorical, persuasive and emotive language, and were highly skilled at identifying this in their classmates’ writing.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and generate a sense of excitement in the classroom. This was shown in a Year 4 mathematics class where pupils were tasked with solving a series of problems. The teacher used good questioning skills to make sure that pupils understood the importance of using different methods of calculation to solve problems, before setting them off on their various tasks. The sense of excitement was palpable as pupils studiously worked out the best way to add, subtract and multiply a series of single-digit numbers to reach a given three-digit number. All pupils made good progress because they enjoyed their challenge and were fuelled by their teacher’s enthusiasm.
- Teaching in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1 is good and has helped to ensure that pupils’ achievement has continually improved over the last five years. As with teaching in key stage 2 and the Reception class, teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide different stimulating and engaging learning activities to meet the educational needs of pupils with a wide range of abilities.
- Senior leaders are determined to broaden pupils’ learning experiences through bringing the curriculum to life. This was evident in a Year 3 history class where pupils spent the day with Marcus the ‘Roman soldier’. By the end of their Roman day, pupils, as legionnaires, stood up and agreed to, ‘face, fight and beat the enemy, with boards and swords’.
- Pupils take great pride in their homework and learning projects and produce work of a very high standard. Parents are of the view that their children are taught well and that homework is set at just the right level to maintain their children’s interest and encourage them to ‘go the extra mile’. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils regularly engage in extended homework projects in their own time. For example, after carrying out extensive research, Year 6 pupils recently created a World War I museum, and invited pupils, parents and staff to its opening.
- Pupils have exceptionally well developed communication skills and express themselves confidently and clearly. This was evident in a Year 6 English class where pupils mustered up all their linguistic powers to

describe different books by their covers. After describing book covers as 'strange', 'cute', 'dark' and 'mysterious', they were encouraged to write atmospheric sentences to convey the essence of the book's 'personality'. However, these well-honed communication skills are not always put into practise in pupils' writing, as opportunities are sometimes missed for them to refine and develop their writing skills across the curriculum.

- A detailed scrutiny of work in pupils' books shows that teachers take a consistently good approach to checking pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling, not only in pupils' English books, but in their mathematics, science, topic and religious education books too. Teachers encourage pupils to produce high-quality work and take pride in their presentation. However, while all books are marked and up to date, sometimes teachers miss opportunities to inform pupils how to develop their work further. As a result of this, pupils cannot always say what they need to do to improve their skills in English and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- A culture of high expectations from staff, parents and the church ensures that all members of the school community focus on pupils achieving to the best of their ability. Pupils are becoming increasingly more resilient and are developing their confidence to try out new things, experiment and learn from their mistakes.
- Pupils learn in a very calm and purposeful learning environment where staff cater well for their social, emotional, spiritual and academic well-being. Pupils say that they feel safe and enjoy school. They know that they can talk to any member of staff if they have any concerns, or if they are concerned about a schoolmate.
- Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school and thoroughly enjoy welcoming visitors, talking about their learning and finding out new things with their friends.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy through exercise and their dietary choices. Leaders monitor pupils' participation rates in extra-curricular sporting activities, which are high for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when on-line. They know that they should never give personal information out to anyone and to always talk to an adult if they are unsure about the safety, or appropriateness, of a website or social networking site. Leaders work effectively with a range of health, social and community agencies to ensure that pupils' welfare is of the highest priority.
- All parents who completed Parent View indicated that their children are happy and safe at school. This sentiment was echoed by parents who met with inspectors and in the school's own questionnaires and surveys of parents' views.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of bullying. They are adamant that this rarely, if ever, takes place in school. They know that there are different types of bullying, such as racism, but are of the view that the school is harmonious and that 'everyone gets on well together'. Inspection evidence concurs with this view. Pupils' understanding of other forms of discrimination, such as homophobic bullying, is not as well developed.
- Pupils have a good understanding of safe and unsafe situations. Many visitors from, for example, the police, lifeguards, park wardens, paramedics and the railway police, give pupils a solid grounding in how to keep themselves safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show very high standards of behaviour both in classrooms and around the school, where they move around safely and considerately. Pupils are exceptionally proud to wear their St John's school uniform. They ensure that school buildings and outside playing areas and fields are well looked after and respected.
- Pupils are of the view that behaviour is good most of the time and that occasional 'fall outs' are soon 'sorted out', as people almost always make up very quickly after minor disagreements.
- Older pupils are excellent role models for their peers. In this school all pupils know, and look after, each other. Year 6 take on their roles as 'buddies' to Reception children very seriously, as do the fully trained Year 5 peer mediators. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in the school and eco councils. The

choir enjoys performing at various events throughout the year. Year 5 pupils are tremendously proud of their achievements, particularly their top United Kingdom ranking in the World Educational Games.

- Pupils, staff and parents are of the view that behaviour is good. The school's behaviour logs show few incidents of poor behaviour and indicate that any issues or concerns are fully investigated. Logs indicate that behaviour is typically good over time, inspection evidence supports this view.
- Pupils enjoy coming together for assemblies and collective worship, where they can engage in prayers and moments of quiet contemplation. They can also learn about values, such as respect, perseverance and honesty, and reinvigorate their resolve to abide by their class values.
- Pupils enjoy attending breakfast and after-school clubs, where they can brush up on their computing skills, play games, eat a healthy breakfast and catch up with their friends. Pupils' attendance is good and is much improved since the previous inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. Their attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in 2015 was the best that it had been for at least the last five years. Their attainment in mathematics was well above average, and average in grammar, punctuation and spelling, their attainment in writing and reading was below average.
- All groups of pupils, including disadvantaged, the most able and those who have special educational needs or disability, made at least good progress in all subjects from their often very low starting points on entry to the Reception class. As with key stage 2, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 was the best that it has been in recent years and was broadly average in all subjects.
- The school's comprehensive tracking data, assessment information and work in pupils' books, show that most pupils made at least good progress across each year-group in 2015. This trend is gathering momentum in 2016, as pupils continue to make accelerated progress across the school.
- Pupils are very proud of their achievements in reading, and rightly so. Pupils thoroughly enjoy a good read. They read widely and often, enjoy speaking in character and have good intonation. Those pupils who read for inspectors showed a good knowledge of the work of different authors. Younger pupils used their phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) skills well to sound out and read unfamiliar words. An average proportion of pupils were secure in their phonics skills and knowledge at the national phonics screening check in 2015. Almost all were secure at the check in Year 2.
- Pupils make consistently good progress in mathematics because it is well taught, enjoyable and challenging. Pupils' books show that they have many opportunities to apply their calculation skills to practical problem-solving activities. All pupils know the importance of having good mathematical skills in everyday life. This is reflected in their discussions about money matters and in their studious approach to this subject.
- Most groups of pupils make good progress in writing, though it is not quite as good as in other subjects. This is because opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Pupils who have special education needs or disability make good and often outstanding progress from their individual starting points. This is due to teachers' careful assessment of pupils' learning needs and the specialist training and support provided by caring teachers and teaching assistants. Tailored small-group and one-to-one teaching activities and strong partnerships with a range of specialists also help to ensure that the right support is put in place to meet pupils' specific learning needs.
- Systems for monitoring the progress of all groups of pupils enable senior leaders and teachers to 'mind the gap', ensuring that support is provided exactly when it is needed. This ensures that there is little danger of any pupil falling behind. Very good systems are in place to support the school's increasing numbers of pupils who enter the school at various times throughout the academic year. This includes those who speak English as an additional language.
- Disadvantaged pupils make the same good and outstanding progress as their peers in school in reading, writing and mathematics, irrespective of their level of ability. Regular pupil progress meetings give teachers a good overview of how well disadvantaged pupils' performance compares to that of their peers. Although in 2015 there were gaps between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school and other pupils nationally in all subjects, school evidence indicates that one in three pupils in this cohort had special educational needs or disability. No such gaps are evident between any groups in the current Year 6 class.

Early years provision

is good

- The leadership and management of all aspects of the early years provision are good and have gone from strength to strength since the previous inspection.
- Children enter the Reception class with different skills in the various areas of learning. For example, in 2015 the skills of a large proportion were weak in speaking, listening and reading, while they were much stronger in health and self-care and technology. Nonetheless, children get off to a positive start in the Reception class, making good progress in all areas of learning. In 2015, an average proportion entered Year 1 with the skills and knowledge necessary for the next stage in their learning.
- The school's own assessment information and children's work shows that all groups of children, including those eligible for additional support through the pupil premium, are making exceedingly good progress and attaining well.
- The quality of teaching is good. Adults are highly skilled and caring, they know the children well and use good questioning techniques which encourage children to think deeply and express themselves clearly. Children learn in thoughtfully arranged indoor and outdoor learning and playing areas which are closely linked to the various areas of learning. Many opportunities are provided for children to read, write, measure, weigh and explore the world around them. They enjoy participating in cooperative learning activities such as construction and role play.
- Children are curious, cooperative and thoughtful. They enjoy talking about their learning, listen carefully and follow instructions well. This was evident in a highly effective phonics session where children listened carefully, sounded out various letters, and hunted for and read three-letter words which were dotted around the classrooms. Children were delighted to show that they could identify and read words such as 'nag', 'met' and 'bet' and draw out different picture cards from a bag and place them in the correct 'sound circles'.
- Adults regularly monitor how well children are performing. This enables them to ensure that learning activities are tailored closely to children's education needs and supports their good progress. Information on children's development is shared with parents, who say that they are happy that their children are safe, well looked after and progressing well.
- The new early years leader has a clear vision for improving provision even further. She has made it a priority to make the outdoor learning and playing areas even more stimulating and to further enhance children's understanding of the world by ensuring that their time in the Reception class is memorable, exciting and enjoyable.
- Children are well behaved at all times. They move around the reception area considerately and safely and with due regard for others. Staff ensure that the same stringent safeguarding procedures in operation in Key Stages 1 and 2 are applied to the early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	104894
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10002204

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Green
Headteacher	Philip Thomson
Telephone number	01704 227441
Website	www.stjohnsprimary.co.uk
Email address	Head.StJohnsCrossens@schools.sefton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. However, the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is increasing.
- 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.
- The senior leadership team has been completely restructured over the last 18 months to include a new headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior teacher with additional teaching and learning responsibilities and a new special educational needs coordinator. The governing body has been restructured and two new members have been appointed.
- Before- and after-school clubs operate from the site, both of which are managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read. Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised in class and separately with the headteacher.
- Inspectors considered 32 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and 34 text responses from parents. Inspectors met informally with parents at the beginning of the school day. The school's own surveys of parents and pupils' views were also taken into account, as well as responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by eight members of staff and 13 pupils.
- A meeting was held with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. Meetings were held with school leaders responsible for English, mathematics, early years provision and provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. This included the school's reviews of its own performance, checks on the quality of teaching, development plans, safeguarding documentation, information about pupils' progress and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

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