

# St Finbar's Catholic Primary School

South Hill Road, Liverpool, Merseyside L8 9RY

## Inspection dates

21–22 September 2016

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- St Finbar's is now a thriving school that has improved considerably since its last inspection.
- The dedicated leadership team of headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked successfully to improve many aspects of the school's work. Of note is the improvement to teaching, which is now consistently good across the school.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' work show that they are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in these subjects are rising and many pupils are on track to reach the expected standards for their age.
- Pupils enjoy learning in a wide range of subjects and produce some quality work. Nevertheless, it is not possible to determine how well pupils are achieving in all subjects because the school is only just beginning to assess pupils' achievements in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics. This is why outcomes still require improvement.
- Children in the early years develop a love of school. They are taught well and have lots of opportunities to learn through first-hand experiences indoors and outside. They make good progress.
- Assessment information is mostly used well to check that all groups of pupils are learning equally effectively.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and behave well in lessons. They listen carefully to teachers, concentrate hard and always try to do their best. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. While most pupils have a good awareness of British values, some cannot explain these values well.
- The school promotes many aspects of pupils' personal development very well. However, the curriculum does not enable all pupils to develop a thorough understanding of diversity.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and parents agree. While there is an effective safeguarding culture, some aspects of record-keeping could be sharper.
- Governors now provide effective support and challenge to school leaders and have made a valuable contribution to the school's improvement. However, they have not ensured that the school's website provides all of the required information for parents.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
  - ensuring that the strong progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics from their different starting points is replicated across the curriculum.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - ensuring that pupils have a more thorough understanding of diversity in modern Britain and of British values
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that the curriculum enables pupils to gain an informed understanding of the diversity of families and relationships and of how prejudice-based behaviour, particularly homophobic behaviour, affects victims' well-being and mental health
  - ensuring that every incident of prejudice-based behaviour and how it is dealt with is formally recorded to better inform leaders and governors of the extent and patterns of inappropriate behaviour and how effectively they are being eliminated
  - refining analyses of assessment information to take better account of pupils' starting points when comparing the progress of different groups of pupils
  - implementing the planned assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics to increase leaders' understanding of pupils' progress across the curriculum
  - making sure that the school's website provides all of the required statutory information and is regularly updated to ensure that all information is current.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have worked successfully to address the areas requiring improvement identified by the last inspection. Comments from pupils, parents, staff, governors and the local authority all reflect a transformed culture. High expectations, aspirations and care for pupils and staff are now very evident features of the school's ethos.
- Clear and purposeful action from the headteacher and deputy headteacher, together with good support from the local authority and increasing challenge from governors, have underpinned key improvements.
- Teaching is now consistently good and current pupils are progressing well. Attendance has improved significantly and pupils are enjoying learning across a wide range of subjects and achieving better outcomes.
- Pivotal to these improvements has been senior leaders' rigorous monitoring of how effectively teaching is improving pupils' learning. This has included regular visits to lessons, reviews of pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Strengths are identified, as well as teachers' next steps for improvement, which are followed up as part of the staff appraisal process.
- Teaching has been strengthened by the comprehensive programme of staff training, which is organised to match the school's improvement priorities and individual staff needs. Senior leaders have dealt robustly with any underperformance in teaching that remained after a programme of training and individual support.
- There are strengths in the leadership of English, mathematics, provision for children in the early years and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These leaders are significantly involved in checking how well teaching and other provision is improving pupils' learning and personal development and enhancing staff development through training and ongoing support.
- Good development of subject leaders has taken place. In line with the school's priorities, proportionate time is provided for all leaders to undertake various checks and audits of provision and learning in their subjects. They all make effective use of this information to write sharp action plans, which they evaluate termly. The process ensures a clear basis from which to improve provision and outcomes in each subject, as well as in aspects such as the provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school regularly assesses how well pupils are learning in reading, writing and mathematics and has rigorous systems to check that teachers' assessments are accurate. Assessment information is used well to organise tailored small-group support for pupils assessed as at risk of not achieving the standards expected for their age. In the same way, additional help and support programmes are organised to extend and deepen the learning of the most able pupils.
- To this end, leaders make good use of the pupil premium and the funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Significant funds have been invested in staff training, including for learning support assistants, who lead many of the small-group sessions to improve these pupils' communication, reading, writing and mathematics skills.

- Senior leaders are clear about the outcomes they expect pupils to achieve as a result of these interventions. They closely monitor and discuss the effectiveness of the programmes with teachers and support assistants and, where necessary, adapt them to ensure that they are having the best impact on pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders regularly use assessment information to compare the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils, such as those who are disadvantaged. This provides helpful insights to support evaluations of how additional funding has improved pupils' outcomes. Leaders recognise that taking more account of pupils' starting points will support more accurate comparisons of the progress of different groups.
- Effective use has been made of the pupil premium to improve outcomes for the most able disadvantaged pupils. In Years 1 to 6, pupils have benefited from writing workshops at a local independent academy. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 attended challenge workshops focused on deepening mathematical reasoning skills and understanding of the use and application of mathematics in everyday life.
- Given the context of historical underachievement at the school, the legacy of which was still evident in the outcomes of many pupils when the school was last inspected, leaders have focused strongly and successfully on improving pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. While the wider curriculum has not been neglected, assessment of pupils' achievements in most other subjects is only just beginning.
- The school's curriculum has been designed to enable pupils to continuously develop the essential skills and knowledge in each subject. Where cross-curricular links are appropriate these are capitalised upon. For the most part, the distinctiveness of each subject is maintained, but with every opportunity taken to extend literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- Quality modern foreign language provision is made for key stage 2 pupils to learn French from a native speaking teaching assistant. Year 2 pupils are also introduced to French during the summer term in preparation for this work in key stage 2.
- Better use is being made of the physical education (PE) and sport premium. Leaders now ensure that teaching staff work alongside specialist coaches to help guarantee the sustainability of this quality provision.
- Visitors and visits to places of interest are thoughtfully planned to extend the work that pupils are studying in class and to widen pupils' horizons. The pupil premium has been used well to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils benefit from this enrichment and from a good range of extra-curricular clubs and a free breakfast club for all pupils who wish to attend.
- Subject themes, such as 'people who have influenced the world', 'trading across the world' and 'the first world war', capture pupils' interest, enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and raise awareness of aspects of British values.
- In this inclusive school, leaders and staff articulate clear messages about respecting people's differences. They welcome pupils from overseas, support their families and celebrate their cultures. This gives pupils positive messages about valuing diversity. Nevertheless, the curriculum does not go far enough in enabling pupils to gain a sufficiently comprehensive understanding of diversity in modern Britain and of how this links with British values.
- The availability of the headteacher and deputy headteacher at the start and end of each day and the accessibility of teaching staff ensure good day-to-day communication with parents. Canvassing parents' views via questionnaires is not seen as productive,

so views are gained informally at meetings and parent coffee mornings about how aspects of the curriculum are taught and how parents can help keep their children safe.

- Parents receive helpful information about their children's achievement and personal development in annual reports. However, the school's website does not give parents all of the information that the school is required to publish by law and out-of-date information is not routinely removed, resulting in some contradictory messages.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance has improved since the school was last inspected and governors are able to explain how much their role has developed since that time.
- Governors welcome the informative headteacher's reports and information from subject leaders, but no longer accept these at face value. Training and the good role models provided by governors with educational backgrounds have improved all governors' skills in asking probing questions about the school's work and pupils' performance. Minutes of governors' meetings clearly show that this practice is now well embedded.
- Governors ensure that they ask questions to understand leaders' rationale for spending additional funding, such as the pupil premium and PE sport premium. They expect leaders to explain the impact that additional funding has had on improving pupils' academic and sporting outcomes, their personal development and the quality of teaching.
- Governors are clear that the school's work has enabled pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and attendance to improve. They are less aware of how to evaluate the success of the school's work in promoting British values, pupils' understanding of diversity and how the school is reducing incidences of prejudice-based behaviours.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Although a number of the school's policies that have links to safeguarding are not published on the school's website, there is a sound culture of safeguarding in the school's day-to-day practice.
- The designated safeguarding lead and deputy receive regular training and ensure that staff receive update training each year. Staff are aware of what to do if they suspect that a child is being abused. Where concerns have been raised about pupils' safety, the records are detailed and show effective communication with appropriate agencies. Collaborative working with these agencies has resulted in some clear improvements to pupils' welfare, behaviour and attendance.
- While pupils are clear that the school deals effectively with all incidents of prejudice-based behaviour that they report, records do not reflect all of the issues leaders have dealt with. This means that governors are unable to analyse patterns of behaviour, how they are being dealt with and the extent to which they are reducing.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching across the whole school. This is ensuring more consistently good learning for all groups of pupils.
- The comprehensive training that teachers have received has ensured strong subject knowledge in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. This is very evident when teachers explain new ideas, reinforce subject-specific vocabulary and show

methods to help pupils solve problems.

- The concerted drive since the last inspection to improve teachers' subject knowledge across the curriculum has also been successful. Staff training and good support from well-informed subject leaders has strengthened teaching in many subjects, especially in science and the humanities. Teachers also ensure that pupils make effective use of information technology to support and present their learning.
- Ongoing assessment enables teachers to have a good working knowledge of their pupils' capabilities and set appropriately high expectations for all. Teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding, skilfully adapting their questions to challenge the most able and ensure that less confident learners achieve success.
- The same is true in the attention that teachers give to planning work for different groups of pupils. While tasks are designed to ensure that all pupils learn the same information and ideas, the amount of adult support, resources and complexity of questions and activities are adapted so that all groups of pupils receive the right level of challenge.
- Across the school, pupils have been taught strategies to work independently. They make use of prompts around the classroom to support their work in literacy and numeracy. Pupils also make sensible decisions about whether they need particular resources, such as dictionaries or mathematics equipment, to complete tasks.
- Reading and writing are taught well. The teaching of phonics begins in the Nursery Year. In the early years and throughout key stage 1 this important skill is taught daily and reinforced continuously. Teachers and learning support assistants demonstrate correct pronunciation and blending of sounds.
- Across the school, teachers ensure that pupils understand how punctuation works, enabling them to become increasingly expressive readers and successful writers. Good teaching of reading for comprehension, enjoyment and to support pupils' learning in a range of subjects remains a strong focus throughout key stage 2.
- The teaching of writing, particularly improving boys' motivation to write, continues to be a priority that is meeting with considerable success. Teachers give careful thought to choosing books and subject themes that inspire boys' interest and stimulate their writing.
- A consistent approach to teaching mathematics has had a positive effect on pupils' learning and enthusiasm for mathematics. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to discuss mathematical ideas and ways of doing calculations; they relish the regular mathematical challenges they receive.
- Teachers apply the school's marking policy consistently. They provide pupils with regular ongoing feedback which is effective in helping them to evaluate how well they are learning and to improve their work.
- Learning support assistants are utilised well. They support the full range of pupil ability groups and make a very effective contribution to the learning and inclusion of pupils who are developing their understanding of English and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils like and respect their teachers and parents talk about a 'special bond' between pupils and teachers. They say that their children are happy and safe in school, and this view is reiterated by pupils. Comments such as, 'School is great', 'It's a really nice place', and, 'I'm really happy here' were common remarks from pupils.
- A number of pupils who have joined the school from overseas said that pupils had welcomed them and been kind to them. These pupils appreciated the staff's and other pupils' understanding of their feelings while settling into a different country.
- Pupils who have been at the school for some time explained that it has improved a lot. They said that lessons are more interesting and they feel that they are learning better than before. There was clear agreement with one pupil's comment, 'Teachers push you to do your best with next steps and targets'.
- In the same way, the school's effective work to develop pupils' confidence and understanding of how to be successful learners was evident in comments such as, 'You learn from your mistakes' and, 'It's okay to say you don't know'. Pupils understand the value of regular attendance and are keen to earn the recognition and rewards that the school provides for good attendance.
- Pupils have an astute understanding of right and wrong, can recognise injustice and understand that people's differences should be respected. Pupils are clear about the unfairness of discrimination on the grounds of race, culture and religion. However, they are less certain of why other types of prejudice, such as homophobic name-calling, are against the rule of British law, or of the impact of such behaviour.
- Through their studies, assemblies and the day-to-day workings of the school, pupils learn about the influence of human rights activists, how public opinion can change government decisions and the need for rules. They experience democracy in action when voting for school councillors and the colour of their new school uniform. However, pupils' awareness of British values is mostly implicit and their explanations of some of the principles of these values lacked depth.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. They explain the need to keep fit and eat healthily, showing good awareness of different food groups, and the importance of looking after their teeth and personal care. They are well aware of the dangers of smoking, taking drugs and the misuse of alcohol.
- All of the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they felt safe in school. They felt confident to speak to a trusted adult about any concerns and none were in any doubt that their concerns would be taken seriously and dealt with. Some were able to recount personal experiences to endorse these views.
- Pupils were able to provide various examples of how the school has taught them to keep themselves safe. They could give some examples of how to stay safe when using the internet but these were not always wide-ranging.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The pupils are well mannered and polite. In lessons, at breaktimes and as pupils move around the school their behaviour is often exemplary. Their friendliness to each other and good-natured play is very evident and summed up in such comments as, 'We all look after each other' and, 'We have loads of fun with the games, like the giant chess'.
- In lessons pupils' behaviour now extends well beyond good conduct. In all classes, pupils listen carefully to their teachers, concentrate hard and get on with their work. It is clear that pupils do not just do this because they know it is the right thing to do, but because they are now motivated and keen to learn. They show maturity when asked to discuss their work with a partner or work as part of a group.
- The pupils who spoke to inspectors felt that behaviour was mostly good and all considered that adults deal with instances of misbehaviour effectively. This included rare instances of bullying and various prejudice-based behaviours, such as name-calling. Pupils like the school's system of 'chances' and believe that it is fair.
- The school's very effective work with parents and pupils to increase attendance has resulted in a marked improvement. Attendance is now close to the national average and persistent absence has reduced significantly. Exclusions are extremely rare. Where fixed-term exclusions have occurred, the reasons are well documented and pupils and their families have been supported during the exclusion and on return to school.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Require improvement

- Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are showing good improvement. The legacy of underachievement is being successfully eliminated, but is still evident in a couple of classes where the attainment of some pupils is not in line with expectations for their age.
- This underachievement is not related to any specific group of pupils. However, as so many pupils in the school qualify for the pupil premium, disadvantaged pupils are heavily represented in this group. Accurate assessments have pinpointed the gaps in pupils' learning and leaders have provided significant additional support, much funded by the pupil premium, to enable pupils to catch up.
- This support is carefully targeted and tailored to enable all pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, to make up lost ground and achieve their potential.
- The most recent assessments for all year groups show that the strategy is paying off. Almost all pupils are making strong progress from their starting points and many are on track to attain the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Needs are identified early and appropriate intervention provided. Progress against pupils' targets is closely tracked and evaluated every six weeks, with new targets set or amended, as necessary. Involvement of pupils and their parents is good.
- The school closely monitors the progress of pupils who join the school during the year, many for short periods before resettlement. However, this means that not all pupils' progress during key stage 2 can be measured from their earlier key stage 1 attainment.
- This was the case for over half the Year 6 pupils who took the national end of key

stage 2 tests and assessments in 2016. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was low. However, the school's progress measure was positive for pupils whose prior attainment was known. Many of these pupils attained the expected standards and were well prepared for secondary school.

- Pupils in key stage 1 make good progress in learning phonics and use these skills effectively to read unknown words and write independently. By the end of Year 2, most pupils use phonics competently and are ready for work in key stage 2.
- At key stage 2 pupils achieve well in reading. When reading in groups they demonstrate questioning, clarifying, predicting and summarising strategies, which supports good comprehension. The focus on improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar is reinforced in the writing that pupils do in other subjects. Pupils' work shows that writing skills are developing well, including for boys.
- Pupils at an early stage of learning English often make rapid progress. Regular, good-quality language support sessions, together with frequent conversations with adults, help pupils to develop communication skills.
- At both key stages, pupils' fluency in mathematics is regularly reinforced in the daily 10-minute basic skills sessions. Reasoning skills develop well in a range of activities linked to problem solving with numbers, shape, space and measures. Pupils increasingly use their knowledge of inverse operations to check the accuracy of their work and to explain how what they are learning will help them in their everyday lives.
- With the exception of formal assessments in science for pupils in Years 2 and 6 last year, standards in all other subjects have yet to be assessed. Consequently, there is limited evidence to determine whether pupils are making strong progress across a wide range of subjects. Pupils' science and humanities work, photographic evidence and current timetables indicate that pupils cover the relevant national curriculum content for each subject and learn the appropriate subject-specific knowledge and skills.
- Work in books reflects that pupils learn about people, places, cultures and civilisations now and in the past. For example, Year 1 pupils learn about the past by handling and describing the features of old and modern toys, while in Year 5 pupils learn about the reliability of primary and secondary sources of historical evidence.
- It is clear from discussions with pupils and from their books that they enjoy and value this learning and the opportunities that the wider curriculum provides for them to be creative in the arts and PE and competitive in sport.
- Pupils' books show that most take good care with presenting and illustrating their work and have been inspired to write quality poems, recounts, diaries and letters and to portray their findings from investigations and surveys in charts and graphs.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Many children's skills on entry to the early years are below those typical for their age and sometimes they are significantly below. This picture of attainment is similar in virtually all areas of learning for boys and girls, but boys' attainment is generally below that of girls'.
- Historical weaknesses in provision were identified by the previous inspection. On her appointment the current early years leader instigated significant changes to the

provision that have had a very positive impact on children's progress and readiness for key stage 1.

- An immediate priority was to ensure quality teaching. A qualified teacher was appointed to teach nursery-aged children and bespoke early years training was provided for all learning support staff. Along with the establishment of key workers for all children, this ensured that staff were clear about their roles and responsibility for pupils' learning.
- Staff training and the early years leader's expertise as a local authority moderator has ensured accurate assessments of children's attainment throughout the year. Effective use of this information to plan the next steps in children's learning is resulting in strong progress and better outcomes across all areas of learning. This is demonstrated well in the comprehensive learning journals that staff compile to show children's achievements.
- By the end of Reception in 2016, 67% of the children attained a good level of development, a rise of almost 30 percentage points from the previous year.
- Precise assessment enables early identification of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that they receive additional help and, where necessary, prompt access to specialist support. In the same way, the most able children are identified early for additional challenge.
- The learning environment is bright and stimulating with a good range of resources to interest children when they arrive in school. Even at this early stage of the year most come into class happily and get involved with the activities on offer. The adults welcome the children and provide caring support for those who are still reluctant to leave their parents and lack confidence to play with others or try new tasks.
- At this time of the year there is a strong focus on developing pupils' personal, social and emotional development and independence indoors and outside. However, no time is lost in introducing phonics, writing and number activities in ways that appeal to the children's interest and curiosity.
- Staff constantly model and extend children's understanding of language and are skilled in doing this in ways that are appropriate for the very high number of children who are at an early stage of speaking English. Continuing involvement in a writing project aimed at improving writing for boys is seen as crucial this year, with boys making up 20 out of the 26 Reception children.
- Rigorous procedures are in place to ensure that children are safe and happy. Close partnerships are established with children's parents, beginning with home visits before the children start school to support children's learning and well-being.

## School details

Unique reference number	104640
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10019785

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Williams
Headteacher	Janet Conley
Telephone number	0151 727 3963
Website	<a href="http://www.st-finbars.co.uk">www.st-finbars.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:finbars-ht@st-finbars.liverpool.sch.uk">finbars-ht@st-finbars.liverpool.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	24 September 2014

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about its policies on child protection, complaints and anti-bullying; the curriculum content in each academic year for every subject; its pupil premium strategy, accessibility plan, objectives and governors' attendance record at governing body and committee meetings.
- The school is smaller than the average primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is rising and has increased markedly during the last year; it is now above average. A significant number of these pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is high.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is low.

- The school's early years provision includes part-time places every morning for children in the Nursery Year and full-time places for children in the Reception Year.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards (2015), which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils join and leave the school other than at the usual admission and transfer times.
- The school provides a free breakfast club for all pupils who wish to attend.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in each class. They checked pupils' work, listened to them read and reviewed the school's assessment information about their attainment and progress.
- Inspectors held two formal discussions with pupils and spoke to others informally in lessons and at playtime and lunchtime.
- A range of school documentation was reviewed. This included the school's evaluation of its effectiveness and the local authority's reviews of the school's work since it was last inspected. Safeguarding information and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance were scrutinised. The school's improvement plans and information about teachers' performance were also checked.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders, five governors and a representative from the local authority.
- There were too few responses to Parent View to provide an overview of parents' responses to the 12 survey questions. However, inspectors were able to consider written comments from two parents. An inspector spoke to 12 parents who attended a coffee morning at the school during the inspection.
- There were no responses to the online staff and pupil surveys.

## Inspection team

Margot D'Arcy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Daley

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