

St Clare's Catholic Primary School

Robert Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, West Midlands B20 3RT

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
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

- Leaders have high expectations for the school and the community it serves. However, they do not apply the same diligence to raising standards and improving the quality of teaching as they do to the pastoral support they provide.
- Standards have improved over time, but they still require further improvement, especially for the most able and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders do not have a strategic view of the progress and attainment for specific groups of pupils.
- Although governors know and support the school well, they do not check the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes effectively.
- Leaders' action plans lack the necessary detail to be effectively monitored and evaluated to ensure that they have maximum impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Teaching assistants are not deployed well enough to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The teaching of phonics is not good enough. The proportion of pupils achieving the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check has been below the national average for the past three years.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good because the work that teachers set is not matched well enough to pupils' needs, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations for pupils' spelling, handwriting and presentation.
- Pupils do not apply their grammar and punctuation skills well enough in writing, especially in key stage 2.
- In early years, children are not sufficiently challenged to apply and deepen their skills in reading, writing and mathematics in independent activities.
- Attendance, although improving, remains below the national average.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders' and governors' shared vision of supporting the community is underpinned by the school's strong Catholic ethos.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and well behaved.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. New pupils and families are warmly welcomed into the school community.
- Leaders know pupils and families well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - governors adopt a strategic approach to monitoring so that they have a secure view of school improvement and can evaluate effectively the impact of leaders' actions on outcomes for pupils
 - leaders' expectations for the quality of teaching are consistently high
 - leaders' action plans define specific actions, timescales and outcomes so that the impact of them on improving pupils' outcomes can be evaluated more effectively
 - leaders evaluate the outcomes of specific groups of pupils more effectively
 - leaders continue to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and the outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations and adopt a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting to improve the quality of pupils' presentation
 - in early years, children are further challenged to apply and deepen their skills in reading, writing and mathematics in independent activities
 - teachers embed a more effective approach to the teaching of phonics
 - teaching assistants are better deployed to impact positively on pupils' learning
 - work is closely matched to pupils' needs, particularly for the most able
 - pupils secure their understanding of basic skills in grammar and punctuation and how to apply them accurately in their writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the diverse and dynamic community the school serves. A high number of pupils join and leave the school at different points in any school year and many come with little or no English. The school knows families well and assesses their needs quickly when they join the school. The school draws on the wide range of languages spoken in school to support pupils and families who are new to the country. Leaders provide support to parents through workshops in basic English and mathematics so that parents may help their children.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They have clearly identified a long-term plan of school priorities. However, short-term plans are not precise enough. They do not detail suitable timescales, persons responsible for leading aspects of school improvement or the desired impact on pupils' outcomes. Some subject leaders' action plans do not specify the actions that will be taken to improve outcomes. This makes it difficult to hold people to account.
- The school's assessment system is detailed. Leaders know individual pupils well and check their progress and attainment diligently. However, the current assessment system does not help leaders and teachers to have a strategic overview of the progress that particular groups of pupils are making. While leaders support pupils well, they do not have a sharp enough overview of the effectiveness of the interventions they provide.
- Leaders monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning through formal lesson observations, work trawls and 'drop-ins' to lessons. Teachers receive action points, and leaders follow them up in a timely manner. Despite this, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain because leaders' expectations are not high enough.
- Leaders are currently developing the curriculum around quality texts to inspire pupils, broaden their vocabulary and give pupils a wider range of experiences. Teachers are beginning to build on pupils' prior learning and develop a progression in skills in subjects across the curriculum by checking what pupils already know. This is at an early stage of development and is not yet in place for all year groups and in all subjects. The curriculum is enriched by educational visits to museums and places of interest linked to topic themes such as the space centre, a chocolate factory, the regiment museum and a local park.
- The teaching of British values is underpinned by the school's gospel values. Pupils recognise the importance of values. They show respect and tolerance for people of different cultures and religions such as Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. They say: 'We're open to people from other countries. We don't treat people differently.' Pupils learn about democracy through debating and voting for house captains and members of the school council.
- Pupils are supported effectively in their social, moral and cultural development. In assembly, pupils learn about compassion. They reflect on important values and apply them to daily life. Pupils listen and engage well in discussion and contribute to singing.
- The physical education (PE) and sports premium is used effectively to increase pupils' physical activity and improve the quality of teaching in PE. Pupils participate in a range of after-school clubs such as football, multi-skills, tag rugby and gymnastics. Funding

has recently been used to develop a new multi-use games area. Although leaders maintain a list of pupils who participate in clubs, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the PE and sports premium is not as precise as it could be.

- The funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is used well. Clear systems are in place to identify and assess pupils who need support.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide a range of interventions delivered by teaching assistants. Leaders check the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils individually in school but do not compare them to other pupils nationally.
- Leaders and teachers benefit from the work they do with their partnership schools. They moderate pupils' work and share good practice. Teachers value the support and training they receive, although some staff say that this is not available to all.
- Most parents and carers spoken to during the inspection said that their children are happy and safe at school. A small number commented that on occasion there is a lack of communication.

Governance of the school

- The school struggles to appoint governors, and currently there are vacancies on the governing body. Serving governors, however, are very committed and supportive of the school. They have a good understanding of the challenges that the school faces. They receive regular feedback from senior leaders and subject leaders about areas of school improvement. Although governors visit school regularly, their visits lack focus because they do not know what they are looking for. They do not take a strategic enough approach to monitoring and evaluating the impact of leaders' effectiveness on pupils' outcomes. As a result, they do not challenge leaders enough about the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Governors demonstrate a strong awareness of local issues in relation to safeguarding. They receive appropriate safeguarding training, keep a check on safeguarding procedures and fulfil their statutory safeguarding responsibilities.
- Governors have not ensured that all statutory information, such as the pupil premium strategy, is available on the school's website.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose and a culture of safeguarding is prevalent in school. Leaders ensure that staff and governors are trained appropriately and receive regular updates regarding safeguarding. Staff know their families well and keep a close eye on vulnerable pupils. They raise concerns and provide support in a timely manner. Leaders, when necessary, will challenge external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the right support. Procedures for the recruitment of staff and the reporting of concerns are thorough and well managed so that pupils are kept as safe as possible.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum and assemblies, including visits from the community police and a theatre group to teach pupils 'how to say no'. Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of e-safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not yet good across school and therefore requires improvement.
- Too often, teachers give pupils the same work, irrespective of their different learning needs. Sometimes, pupils are given work that is too hard for them or too easy for them. Pupils develop knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects, but there are limited opportunities to deepen learning. Teachers do not give the most able pupils activities that challenge them enough, and as a result they do not reach the higher standards of work of which they are capable. Inspection evidence shows that the level of challenge for the most able pupils is too low in most year groups and in most subjects.
- Pupils' spelling, handwriting and presentation are often weak because teachers do not have high enough expectations. Teachers do not model an expected standard of handwriting when teaching and when writing in pupils' books. Some pupils do not spell everyday words accurately, such as days of the week or months of the year, or subject-specific vocabulary, even when they are provided for them.
- Teachers prepare pupils well to use punctuation and grammar, but pupils do not apply their writing skills enough or write at length in different subjects.
- The quality of teaching is better in Year 5 and Year 6, and consequently pupils make stronger progress. For example, pupils in Year 5 made good progress in letter writing because there was a clear sequence of learning. Some pupils in Year 6 have improved their vocabulary choices in writing and make better use of grammatical features such as using short sentences for effect.
- The teaching of phonics is not good enough across all year groups and classes. Currently, pupils repeat phases of phonics they have already learned.
- Over the past two years, leaders have developed a reading project, which continues to roll out across school. Pupils are better engaged in reading, and as a result progress in reading improved at the end of key stage 2. The project has also had a positive impact on writing so that more pupils achieved greater depth in writing. The most able pupils read fluently with a good understanding of the text. They use phonic strategies effectively to decode words. The least able pupils do not have secure strategies to help them read.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. When pupils are given meaningful tasks, they apply themselves well.
- Leaders have introduced greater opportunities for pupils to develop their language through talk, particularly before writing. Pupils also discuss current events or issues such as homelessness in 'talk time'. This is especially helpful for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils take part in debates to develop confidence and the ability to express themselves articulately.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare requires
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improvement.

- In some lessons, pupils become disengaged because work is not closely matched to their ability or they are not supported effectively.
- Pupils do not take enough pride in the presentation of their work.
- Although some pupils and parents raised some concerns about bullying, inspectors found this not to be an issue. Staff and leaders deal with any concerns appropriately. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying, including cyber bullying. They say that they feel safe in school and 'school takes care of you.'
- Pupils are kind and supportive to new children who join the school. They help them to settle in quickly and be part of the school community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- They respond well to adults because they are respectful. They demonstrate good manners and hold doors open for visitors.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the behaviour policy, and the number of exclusions has reduced. Pupils move around school in a calm and orderly way and play together well at breaktimes. They enjoy playing on the school's new multi-use games area.
- The school has effective systems and procedures in place to secure good attendance and punctuality. The attendance team meets regularly to discuss pupils and families, and actions to be taken. They follow up absence with telephone calls, home visits and meetings with parents. They tackle pupils who are regularly late to school. As a result, attendance is improving, although the high level of mobility has a negative effect on school absence figures.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2017 pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 was in line with the national average in writing and mathematics but below the national average in reading. In 2018, provisional results show improved progress in reading and mathematics but a decline in writing.
- Although outcomes have improved overall since 2016, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics remains below the national average at the end of key stage 2.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make is broadly average, but their attainment continues to be below other pupils nationally. In most year groups, the percentage of disadvantaged pupils who reach age-related expectations in reading has increased.
- Although attainment at the end of key stage 1 is below national, standards show a rising trend. The proportion of pupils who pass the phonics screening check, however, has declined.
- Although the school experiences high levels of pupil mobility that presents particular challenges, pupils' outcomes, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged, are not good enough.

- Although 14 new pupils joined the Year 1 cohort in 2017, which leaders said affected the outcomes in the phonics screening check in 2018, the teaching of phonics is not good enough in all year groups.
- In writing, current pupils achieve standards below those expected for their age. Pupils' books show that there is a lack of challenge for the most able pupils because work is not accurately matched to their ability. The most able pupils use increasingly sophisticated vocabulary. However, they do not apply their skills in punctuation and grammar well because teachers do not insist on high standards.
- Pupils' books show that there is inconsistent progress across subjects, specific groups of pupils and year groups. In subjects such as science, for example, low expectations in some tasks limit pupils' progress. In mathematics, pupils, particularly the most able, do not work at greater depth to extend and deepen their learning.
- On occasion, some pupils make strong progress, for example pupils who speak English as an additional language, but others do not. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress against the small steps and targets set for them.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children join the Nursery and the Reception Year with knowledge, skills and understanding well below those typical for their age. Some children join with limited or no English. Not all children in Nursery enter the Reception class. Children join the Reception Year from a range of settings and some come with no pre-school experience.
- Outcomes in early years have risen steadily over time, although the proportion of children achieving a good level of development declined in 2018 and remains below national. Most children make good progress from low starting points, but few children reach exceeding standards, especially in reading and mathematics.
- The early years leader has an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of early years. However, the targets set for development, although accurate, lack precision in how success will be evaluated and the impact this will have on outcomes for pupils.
- Developing children's language and confidence is a priority. In Reception, children had listened to a story about owl babies. They were encouraged to retell the story, and with the support of a storyboard to help them sequence the story, most did this well. Children completed a range of activities, including drawing pictures, creating a story map, writing words to describe the owls' feelings and acting out the story. One child explained that mummy owl went hunting and said, 'She ate a mouse – disgusting!'
- In independent activities, children focus on tasks and are well behaved. Children take turns and play with each other well because relationships are strong, clear routines are established and expectations are high. However, adults do not support children as effectively as they might to move their learning on. For example, in cutting and sticking activities, adults did not show children how to hold scissors correctly. In writing, adults did not correct inaccurate letter formation, and when playing a ball game, children were not encouraged to count or record numbers.

- In mathematics, children made houses and robots with pre-cut shapes and matched shapes to pictures of trains and lorries. Children recorded shape names but were not encouraged to identify shapes independently or explore simple properties of shapes to deepen their knowledge and understanding. In Nursery, children catch numbered fish from the water tray but have no opportunity to develop number recognition any further.
- Children develop phonics skills more effectively in early years. Although they are at an early stage, they are beginning to recognise letters and sounds. The most able children are beginning to blend sounds to read simple words such as 'sad'.
- Leaders try to find ways to overcome barriers to engage with parents. For example, the school provides informal drop-in sessions and opportunities for parents to share their child's learning journey books. They have recently organised a phonics workshop for parents, with translators to help them.
- Safeguarding is effective and welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	103476
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10052850

This inspection of the school 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	440
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara McPhillips
Headteacher	Victoria Rivett
Telephone number	0121 554 3289
Website	www.stclare.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@stclare.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school is temporarily experiencing a high level of staff absence.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium grant is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above the national average. Pupils come from a wide range of heritage groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The mobility of pupils is higher than the national average. Many pupils join the school with little or no English.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and looked at pupils' work. Senior leaders joined inspectors for some observations.
- Inspectors observed pupils on the playground and in the dining room, talked to pupils formally and informally and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior staff, middle leaders and the office manager.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body, two other governors and a representative of the archdiocese, and spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered six responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including five written comments. Seventeen responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and eight responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire were also considered.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's own self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, information on pupils' progress and attainment, records of behaviour and attendance, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, minutes of governing body meetings, the single central record of staff recruitment and safeguarding information.

Inspection team

Sue Cameron, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Su Plant	Ofsted Inspector
Anna Smith	Ofsted Inspector

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