

St Sebastian's RC Primary School

Douglas Green, Salford, Greater Manchester M6 6ET

Inspection dates

10 to 11 April 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has united leaders and governors in their drive to improve the school. Although there is further work to do, together they have already improved teaching, pupils' outcomes and attendance.
- Pupils are happy in this harmonious school. They work hard, play safely and want to learn. Parents and carers are very pleased that they chose this school for their children.
- Teaching is good and is particularly strong in phonics, reading, writing and in the early years. Teachers benefit from support through a network of local schools.
- Effective teaching has improved pupils' reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Mathematics teaching is highly effective for the oldest pupils, who receive challenging work. However, it is not as strong in other year groups.
- Writing is taught consistently well across the school. Pupils apply their widening vocabulary and knowledge of grammar in their writing in subjects such as science and humanities.
- Provision in the early years is caring and nurturing. Good teaching means interesting and fun activities improve children's skills and ensure that they make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Younger pupils use phonics to help them read unfamiliar words and older pupils read with increasing confidence.
- Attendance is improving, including for disadvantaged pupils, because leaders persistently challenge parents who keep their children away from school.
- Leaders have improved the richness of the curriculum, but it does not prepare some pupils well enough for the diversity of life in modern Britain.
- Middle leaders are at the early stages of developing their skills. Subject leaders' monitoring sometimes fails to spot the key changes needed to improve pupils' learning.
- Governors have improved the way that they work. They manage the school's finances carefully and check that safeguarding is effective.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well due to effective support in class and help from external agencies.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including many who speak English as an additional language or joined the school in key stage 2, make good progress because of the high-quality extra help they receive.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching in mathematics, especially at key stage 2, so that progress continues to improve for all pupils, but particularly the most able, by:
 - sharing the effective practice in teaching that exists in some areas of the school
 - making sure all pupils have work to do which makes them think harder
 - improving teachers' planning so that pupils are given more opportunities to deepen their learning before being moved on to new work.
- Leaders further improve the curriculum so that all pupils are prepared better for life in modern Britain.
- Further improve middle leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning by:
 - making sure that subject leaders can identify the key strengths and weaknesses of teaching in order to make a greater difference to pupils' learning
 - using the findings from monitoring activities to inform any additional training needs required by staff.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has worked tirelessly to improve the school since her appointment. The strong focus on teamwork has ensured that leaders and governors work as a united team who share a common drive to improve the school. Leaders' work has been successful. This is now a good school.
- Leaders and staff make sure pupils are happy and safe and learn in a harmonious school. As a result, pupils work hard and are keen to please their teachers.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to improve attendance. Leaders challenge parents who keep their children away from school without good reason. Many pupils who previously were persistently absent now attend school regularly. Leaders continue to work with a small number of pupils who continue to miss out on the good quality of education provided by the school.
- Teaching is good and stronger than it has been in the past because of the many opportunities that staff have to help them improve their teaching skills. Teachers say that requests for additional help or training have never been refused and they relish the support from senior leaders. Pupils' learning is improving, especially in reading and in the early years, because of this stronger teaching.
- Leaders have introduced a programme to improve the monitoring of teaching, which includes visits to classrooms, checks on pupils' work in books and gathering the views of pupils. This approach is effective, as it has improved teaching and ensured that support is provided where it is needed. However, this information is not always used as effectively as possible to identify any additional training needs that staff may have.
- Middle leaders, some of whom are new in post, are now taking on more responsibilities, including checking on the quality of teaching and learning in their subject area. This role is developing. Subject leaders' records of their observations of teaching and learning sometimes miss the key things teachers need to do to improve learning. For example, when analysing pupils' work, subject leaders sometimes miss checking if pupils are doing work that is hard enough for them or is deepening learning.
- Leaders welcome the support from the diocese, the local authority and from a cluster of schools in the local area. This support is used to very good effect to check the accuracy of teachers' assessments and share successful strategies to improve attendance. It is developing the skills of newly appointed middle leaders effectively.
- Leaders have already improved the curriculum through bringing in specialist teachers so that pupils benefit from rich learning opportunities taught by experts. For example, an artist works with pupils on projects that link art with religion. Further work to improve the curriculum is ongoing, including a rethink of what pupils are taught in humanities and science. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils, including those that develop their talents in music, dance and sport.

- Pupils are given a rich tapestry of experiences to support their development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The Catholic ethos of care and respect underpins much of the school's work in this area.
- Some aspects of pupils' learning have been neglected in the past, and the new leadership team is taking action to fill pupils' gaps in knowledge. For example, a very small proportion of pupils do not have a secure understanding of British values, or of extremism and radicalisation. Some pupils do not know enough about equality and diversity. However, this is improving quickly. Leaders have secure plans in place to fill the few remaining gaps by the end of the year.
- Pupils with SEND are supported well in their learning. Leaders know pupils exceptionally well. They know the difficulties faced by pupils in their learning and work with a wide range of external agencies to remove these barriers. For example, buying in specialist speech and language support for pupils, including for those who speak English as an additional language, is helping them to make good progress in all subjects.
- Pupil premium funding is used to very good effect, such as to improve the attendance and punctuality of disadvantaged pupils. For example, pupils who are often late for school or absent are given a free breakfast and an alarm clock to help them to arrive for school on time. This good start to the day ensures that pupils are ready to learn.
- Primary physical education and sport funding is used well to increase participation in physical activity. For example, some of the money has been used to train pupils as play leaders to organise games at playtime and lunchtime. Pupils play safely and happily together using play equipment bought through this funding.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors are very pleased with the school. Parents say that teachers willingly listen to, and act on, any concerns. They say they are well informed about what is happening in school through texts, emails, letters home and telephone calls. Parents like the homework that pupils are set, including projects which encourage parents to do research or to get involved with making things to help their children.

Governance of the school

- Governors have improved the way that they work since the previous inspection, following an external review of governance. Recommendations have been used to make changes to governance to ensure that it is more effective.
- Governors are suitably knowledgeable and skilled for their roles because they attend up-to-date training. A recent audit of governors' skills has helped to further inform their training needs.
- The headteacher's reports to governors are written with honesty and clarity and enable governors to ask senior leaders challenging questions about the school's work. Governors know that teaching is improving, based on senior leaders' monitoring of teaching, and that some subject leaders are at the early stages of developing their role in reviewing teaching in their subjects.
- Governors keep a tight overview of spending. They know how pupil premium funding is being used to employ additional specialist teachers, such as in English and in

mathematics in order to reduce class sizes so that more personalised help can be provided for disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Robust checks on the suitability of staff to work in the school are carried out. Staff personnel files are updated regularly with details of training and files are kept secure.
- Leaders know individual pupils and their families exceptionally well. Concerns are reported immediately to the relevant authorities and are swiftly followed up if there are delays in response.
- Staff safeguarding training is up to date, including for governors. Both co-chairs of the governing body have been trained in safer recruitment. Staff know the correct procedures to follow if they have concerns about a pupil. Some staff, including those who work with children in early years, are knowledgeable about paediatric first aid.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and know who they could turn to in school if worried about something in school or at home. They know the correct 'lock-down' procedure to follow in the event of a serious incident in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is improving because teachers are sharing their ideas and putting the skills that they have learned in training into practice. As a result, teaching is now effective, and pupils' progress is good.
- Phonics teaching is a strength in early years and in Year 1. Teachers skilfully plan activities for groups of children and pupils that match their ability in learning phonics.
- The teaching of reading has improved because teachers focus on developing speaking and listening skills, which widens pupils' vocabulary and improves their reading for understanding. Teachers ensure that pupils have the skills that they need to become confident and fluent readers.
- Teachers routinely question pupils in a way that encourages them to develop their reasoning skills. Teachers ask pupils to explain where their answer comes from or why they think that their answer is correct. Some pupils apply these skills well in their written explanations in mathematics, which encourages pupils to reflect on their answers.
- The teaching of writing is highly effective because of the many opportunities that teachers plan for their pupils to write in different styles or for different purposes. Pupils' work in books shows examples of letter writing, producing a travel guide, writing a newspaper report and understanding different points of view. Pupils write with empathy in their work on what makes a happy home.
- Teachers have high expectations of the way pupils present their work. Pupils' written work in books is of exceptionally high quality. Pupils routinely check for spelling errors and make sure they use punctuation correctly. Handwriting is neat and teachers

provide helpful support to pupils to help them to improve or maintain their writing style.

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting activities that engage and challenge pupils in writing. Year 6 pupils in English enthusiastically shared their ideas about alternative vocabulary in describing the 'three witches scene' from Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. At the same time, the teacher reminded pupils about grammar rules as pupils searched for the subordinate clause in sentences.
- Mathematics teaching is improving across the school but is not yet as consistently strong as English teaching. Some mathematics teaching is highly effective and other teachers are starting to improve their skills through sharing this good practice. Occasionally, teachers do not plan enough time on one topic before they move pupils on to something new. Sometimes, teachers set work that is too easy for pupils so that they do not receive enough challenge.
- Teaching assistants support learning well. As well as helping pupils to remain on task, they rephrase teachers' explanations so that pupils understand better what they must do. Pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit enormously from this additional support.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to take on positions of responsibility and contribute to the wider life of the school. Pupils are exceptionally proud of these responsibilities, which include prefects, play leaders, house captains, school council representatives, and 'mini-vinnies', who organise fundraising events for charities.
- Pupils are well cared for at breakfast club. Pupils say that they like eating breakfast and socialising with their friends. They also use the time to continue with their research for projects, read, or join in with organised physical activities.
- Pupils who attend booster classes, organised before the start of school, are very well supported in helping them to improve their arithmetic and reading skills. Pupils eagerly take part in these sessions and enthusiastically work together with other pupils and their teachers.
- Pupils say that although there was some bullying last year, this has now stopped. They are confident that if any bullying did happen, teachers would sort it out and parents would be informed.
- Pupils have a good understanding of Catholic values and the impact of these on their lives. However, their knowledge of British values is less strong. Some pupils in Years 5 and 6 could not recall anything they had been taught in the past about the rule of law or individual liberty. Although they had heard of extremism and radicalisation, a few pupils asked were unclear about how these views might be threats to society.
- Pupils were appalled at the idea of someone using racist or derogatory language and are confident that this does not happen in their school. However, some pupils said they

had not been taught about some issues related to equality and diversity and would like to know more.

- Pupils are highly confident about how to keep themselves safe when using technology such as computers and mobile phones. Pupils chosen as 'e-cadets' regularly speak in assemblies and provide guidance to other pupils on how to stay safe online. Pupils know the correct procedures to follow if they see something online that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud to be part of their school family. They have excellent manners, show respect for each other, welcome visitors and work and play together happily. Pupils have a strong commitment to their learning, work hard and want to improve.
- Pupils very rarely need reminding to manage their behaviour. They show excellent self-discipline and rarely disrupt the learning of others.
- Leaders make sure that classrooms and corridors are bright, with colourful and stimulating displays and high-quality resources for learning. Pupils show respect for their classrooms, books and resources and look after these carefully.
- Any incidents of unacceptable behaviour are recorded and used by leaders to provide bespoke support for pupils, using outside agencies if necessary. Since the headteacher started in the school, there have been no pupils excluded from school.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve attendance. Leaders continue to challenge parents who allow their children a day off school on their birthday or who take a whole day off to attend medical appointments or who take their children on extended family holidays during term time. As a result, attendance is improving. It is in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils achieve well by the end of key stage 1. In 2018, attainment at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics was very similar to the national average in each of these subjects. Pupils in key stage 1 make good progress in developing their skills and knowledge because teaching is good. Pupils are therefore well prepared to start key stage 2.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been below average in the past. Decisive and effective action to improve the way in which phonics is taught has been successful. In 2018, an above average proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check.
- In 2018, Year 6 pupils made strong progress from their key stage 1 starting points in writing, and average progress in reading and mathematics. Current pupils in key stage 2 are making consistently strong progress in reading and writing. Progress in

mathematics is not as secure in some year groups. However, it is improving as teachers work together to strengthen mathematics teaching.

- Stronger teaching of reading in key stage 2 means more pupils are now taught the knowledge and skills that they need to become confident and competent readers. For example, pupils in Year 5 showed a good knowledge of meaning, inference and deduction.
- Pupils make good progress in writing, which continues to be a strength in key stage 1 and key stage 2. Work seen in pupils' books reflects pupils' good progress in writing across the curriculum. Pupils produce extended pieces of writing in a range of subjects. For example, in science pupils write about scientific processes that they have investigated.
- Pupils use and apply their mathematics skills well in other subjects. For example, in geography, pupils confidently use correct coordinate notation in their map reading skills. They display information correctly using a range of accurately drawn statistical diagrams.
- The most able pupils make good progress in reading and writing in all year groups. Teachers routinely plan more challenging work for pupils, which is helping all pupils, but particularly the most able, to deepen their understanding. In some classes, the most able pupils make strong progress in mathematics. However, this is not reflected in other year groups.
- In the past, some pupils with SEND made much less progress than they should because of weaker teaching and a lack of support to meet their needs. Pupils with SEND now make good progress across the curriculum because they are well supported.
- Many of the disadvantaged pupils also have speech and language difficulties which have affected their learning in the past. Speech and language therapists and a bilingual teaching assistant provide effective support for these pupils, who are rapidly improving their speech and language development. Pupils from this group who speak English as an additional language make very good progress from their starting points and quickly catch up with their classmates.
- Teachers use assessments to identify gaps in pupils' learning in English and mathematics. They provide carefully planned and bespoke support to help pupils to catch up if they fall behind, or to fill gaps in their learning. Extra support is mainly targeted at pupils in Year 6 to make sure they are better prepared to start secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- Following an external review of early years provision, the new leader of early years acted on recommendations and immediately reorganised indoor and outdoor learning areas. Effective actions have ensured that both spaces are now used successfully to provide a wide range of high-quality activities for children to make learning fun and purposeful.
- Classrooms and outside areas are well-resourced. Children learn to grow vegetables in the garden area, measure capacity by experimenting with different sized containers

and water, and use practical equipment in mathematics to help them to count and understand number.

- Teachers and other adults work well together as a team and all have high expectations for children. They have established a caring environment where children are happy and safe.
- Teachers and other adults manage behaviour well. Children listen well to their teachers and are quick to respond to instructions, such as when they move between activities.
- Teachers carefully assess children when they start in Nursery or Reception. Assessments are checked for accuracy by working with other schools in the cluster and with the local authority. Teachers use these assessments to plan learning activities for children to develop their skills and knowledge.
- A very small number of children with SEND are in Nursery and Reception. Bespoke support is organised for these children, using external agencies and specialists, for example, to improve children's speech and language development and provide for those children with limited spoken English.
- Phonics is taught well because teachers have been well-trained, and they willingly share their practice across Nursery and Reception. Phonics activities are closely planned to meet children's needs.
- Children make strong progress from their low starting points as a result of consistently effective teaching. As a result, the proportion of children in the school who reach or exceed a good level of development by the end of Reception is in line with the national average.
- Parents of children in early years say they really appreciate the workshops and meetings organised to support them in helping their child, such as the opportunity to 'stay and play' and help with phonics learning.
- The new leader of early years is developing her skills in checking the effectiveness of the provision. She maintains an overview of the quality of teaching and learning across early years through half-termly visits to classes and provides staff with verbal feedback to help them to improve.

School details

Unique reference number	105963
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10087825

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	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-chairs	Caroline Boldrini and Joanna Atherton
Headteacher	Amanda Donoghue
Telephone number	0161 921 1625
Website	www.stsebastiansprimary.co.uk
Email address	stsebastians.rcprimaryschool@salford.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 to 29 March 2017

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school, with one class in each year group.
- Over half of the pupils are disadvantaged, which is above average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils varies in each year group. About three quarters of pupils in Year 5 are disadvantaged.
- A diverse range of different heritages are represented by pupils at this school. Less than half of the pupils are of White British heritage. Almost one third of pupils are Black or Black British-African, with small numbers from other backgrounds, including Travellers.
- Almost one third of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is above average. The school welcomes pupils from families who are new arrivals to the country, many of whom start mid-year.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average.

- Early years provision comprises one Nursery class for three- and four-year-old children and one Reception class for four- and five-year-olds. Children in the Nursery attend full-time.
- The school provides a breakfast club each morning.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2017. Other recent changes to leadership include a new assistant headteacher and a new leader of early years.
- Changes made to governance since the previous inspection include the appointment of some new governors and sharing the role of the chair of governors.
- This is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school. The school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in November 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe teaching and pupils' learning. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- An inspector visited breakfast club and additional support clubs organised for pupils who need extra help in mathematics and English.
- Samples of pupils' mathematics work and their writing in books was scrutinised jointly with leaders. Inspectors also looked at work displayed on walls in classrooms and on corridors.
- Inspectors observed pupils at lunchtime and at playtime and spoke with pupils about their work during lessons.
- Inspectors met formally with two groups of pupils to listen to them read and to find out their views of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and middle and senior leaders.
- An inspector spoke with parents as they arrived at school at the end of the day to collect their children. An inspector analysed the 41 responses to Parent View and the school's analysis of their own survey of parents' views.
- An inspector met with a group of governors. An inspector met separately with a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner, who also represented the diocese.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of leaders' views on the school's effectiveness, the school improvement plan and information on pupils' achievements, attendance and behaviour. Notes from governors' meetings and reports written following external reviews were also considered.

Inspection team

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