

Inspection of St Nicholas's Catholic Primary School

Orthes Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L3 5XF

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 February 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit from attending this welcoming school where diversity is celebrated. They are happy to come to school to learn and to play with their friends. Pupils take good care of each other.

Pupils enjoy being a 'buddy' to new pupils who arrive from other countries. They are keen to take up leadership roles, such as being a house captain. Pupils grow in confidence because of these extra-curricular opportunities.

Pupils are safe in school. They behave well. They are polite and respectful to each other. Staff are adept at dealing with any incidents of bullying.

Staff nurture children carefully in the early years and help them to settle in quickly. However, some children in the Nursery Year and the Reception Year do not learn as well as they could, especially in reading. Even so, teachers in key stage 1 help these pupils to catch up quickly.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. They make sure that pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), get the support that they need. Although some pupils only attend the school for a short time while their parents or carers are studying at the nearby university, all pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are supported to achieve well.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

In Years 1 to 6, leaders have created an ambitious and well-organised curriculum that enables pupils to build up a rich body of knowledge. Leaders have identified most of the key knowledge that pupils need to know. They have successfully set out what pupils should learn at different points.

In the early years, however, the curriculum is not as well planned. In some areas of learning, leaders have not considered well enough what children in the Reception and Nursery Years need to learn to prepare them for the demands of the key stage 1 curriculum. Some teaching staff in the early years are not clear about the knowledge that they need to focus on to support children's learning. As a consequence, children are not as well prepared as they should be for key stage 1.

Leaders prioritise reading. However, in the early years, some adults are not well trained to deliver the phonics programme. They do not correct children's mistakes about the sounds that letters make. Consequently, children develop misconceptions in their phonics learning. They go on to sound out words incorrectly. Some adults do not correct these errors in a timely manner. That said, teachers in Years 1 and 2 successfully enable pupils to get back on track with their reading.

In key stages 1 and 2, pupils benefit from the consistent approach to the teaching of reading. This includes the teaching of phonics. These pupils, including those whose main language is not English, build up secure reading knowledge. This knowledge enables pupils to progress well across the wider curriculum. Pupils develop confidence and fluency in sounding out unfamiliar words through regular practice. Pupils told inspectors that the books that teachers provide are 'just right' and motivate them to read more.

Teachers are adept at finding out what pupils already know and what they need to know next. They are also successfully trained to identify and support pupils who may have SEND. Teachers are skilled at helping those who need to catch-up quickly due to disrupted learning as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They listen attentively to their teachers and do their best in lessons. Older pupils rarely need reminding to keep focused. They were proud to share their many achievements across the curriculum with inspectors.

Leaders and governors ensure that pupils benefit from a wide range of trips and enrichment activities which capture pupils' interests. These help pupils to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the rich history and diversity in and around Liverpool. They also help pupils to make sense of the wider world. Pupils reflect on their own and others' personal qualities through the well-planned personal development programme. They appreciate that 'differences' make the world more interesting.

Pupils take full advantage of the clubs that are on offer. These activities successfully help pupils to develop new skills and interests. Older pupils know that these contribute to developing healthy lifestyles and prepare them well for later life.

Governance is strong. Governors provide clear strategic direction at the school. They ensure that the quality of education continues to improve, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. They provide effective support and challenge to leaders and other staff. They are focusing assiduously on improving the early years to ensure that children get the best possible start to their learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff, governors and leaders are well trained in the potential harm that pupils may face. They are vigilant and know how to keep pupils safe. Leaders and staff share any concerns diligently with those responsible for safeguarding.

Leaders take prompt and effective action to manage any potential risks to pupils. They provide well-considered support to those who are most vulnerable. Leaders check that pupils who are visiting home countries remain safe. They liaise with other agencies effectively.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves and others safe. They can describe ways to protect themselves from potential harm when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not established a well-planned curriculum in the early years. Leaders have not fully defined what children need to learn. This means that children are not fully prepared for the demands of key stage 1. Leaders need to ensure that the early years curriculum is well planned so that it successfully underpins the curriculum in key stages 1 and 2.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff across the early years support children to build up their phonics knowledge effectively enough. This means that some children in the early years have misconceptions about how letters and words sound. Leaders need to ensure that staff in the early years are trained to deliver a well-planned phonics programme. Leaders also need to ensure that staff in the early years quickly and effectively address children's misconceptions in how letters and words sound.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	104657
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10200803
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	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Maureen McDaid
Headteacher	Martin Davies
Website	www.stnicholasliverpool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	30 and 31 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed. A new deputy headteacher has also been appointed.
- A large proportion of pupils at this school have lived in other countries before they began at the school. Many pupils speak English as an additional language.
- This school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Its last section 48 inspection took place in May 2018.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school, including the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. This included: the school's central record of staff and visitors; staff training records; records of safeguarding; and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and geography. They talked with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans and samples of work from other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. They considered responses to Ofsted's Parent View. They also considered the free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff's and pupils' surveys.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jon Ashley

Ofsted Inspector

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