

St Sebastian's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Holly Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L7 0LH

Inspection dates 20–21 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. All groups of pupils, including the most able and those with special educational needs, make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics reaching well-above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- The teaching of mathematics and phonics (the sounds the letters make) is a particular strength in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils enjoy reading and reading is promoted well across the curriculum.
- Senior leaders use pupil premium funding effectively. As a result disadvantaged pupils make outstanding progress and leave St Sebastian's with levels of attainment that are well-above average.
- The broad, balanced and rich curriculum contributes to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares pupils well for the opportunities and challenges of life in modern Britain.
- The primary school sports premium is being used effectively by senior leaders to broaden the range of sporting opportunities open to the pupils and encourage healthy life-styles.
- The headteacher, ably supported by his senior team, has united the school community behind his uncompromising vision that nothing but the best will do. As a result teaching is never less than good and pupils achieve well across the school.
- The local authority uses staff expertise at St Sebastian's to help other schools, locally, to improve.
- The quality of teaching has been maintained at the outstanding level of the previous inspection. As a result pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and make rapid progress.
- The early years provision is well led and managed. The children make rapid progress given their starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour and the school's work to keep pupils safe and secure are outstanding.
- The governors are very effective. They have an excellent understanding of the school's performance including the quality of teaching and the standards achieved by the pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 parts of lessons and eight different teachers across all key stages, including the early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Two of these lessons were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. One inspector attended a whole school religious service to commemorate St Sebastian’s feast day. Inspectors also observed pupils at play, during lunchtime and as they moved around the school.
- Separate meetings were held with senior leaders including the headteacher and the two deputy headteachers, four governors including the Deputy Chair of the Governing Body, the senior leader with responsibility for monitoring pupils’ progress, and those members of staff responsible for the early years and pupils with special educational needs. Inspectors also met with representatives from the local authority, the Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool and the lead practitioner with oversight of the school’s work in relation to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors also held meetings with the educational psychologist, groups of teachers and groups of pupils of different ages.
- School policies were examined as was the work in pupils’ books. Senior leaders’ analysis of how well the school is doing and the school development plan were also evaluated. One inspector scrutinised the school’s records of attendance, the school’s class behaviour logs and the record of the checks made on the suitability of adults to work with children.
- One inspector also listened to pupils read and asked about their reading habits.
- Inspectors took into account the 37 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 11 responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

Charles Lowry, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Terry Bond	Additional Inspector
Sheila Loughlin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Sebastian's is an average-sized, one-form-entry primary school situated in the Fairfield district of Liverpool, which is about two miles east of the city centre.
- The school has been in a hard federation with another Catholic school, St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, since April 2006. Both schools have the same headteacher and governing body. Several staff work across both school sites.
- The Field of Dreams Nursery is housed on the school site and is managed by the federation.
- Both St Cuthbert's and the Field of Dreams Nursery are inspected separately by Ofsted and were not included in this inspection.
- There are slightly more girls in the school than boys.
- Two foundation classes enable the school to provide full-time and part-time early years education.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (the extra funding the school receives to help with the education of children eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is above average as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is slightly below average.
- An above average proportion of pupils live with a disability or have special educational needs.
- The school does not make use of any off-site, alternative providers for its pupils' education.
- The school is a centre of excellence for the teaching of Spanish.
- The local authority has identified the school as a centre of good practice and the headteacher is providing professional support to senior leaders in three other schools.
- St Sebastian's met the government's floor standards in 2014. The floor standards are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school is the holder of a large number of awards. These include: Investors in People (Gold Award); Social and Emotional Aspects to Learning (best practice); the Association for Primary Education (outstanding commitment to primary physical education and sport); Green Flag (eco-schools award); International Schools; National Association for Able Children in Education; Arts Mark Gold; and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of the written records of senior leaders' evaluation of how well the school is doing, making sure that they not only describe the actions being taken to improve the school but also evaluate their impact.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, well supported by his colleagues on the senior leadership team has ensured that teaching is of consistently high quality. As a result pupils of all backgrounds and abilities achieve well and conduct themselves impeccably.
- Senior leaders have a dynamic and progressive vision for the school, which has been embraced by their colleagues resulting in everyone working towards the same highly aspirational goals. As one member of staff said, 'I am very proud to work in this school. All staff are so committed to giving the very best education to our children. A wonderful school community.'
- Senior leaders and governors work effectively to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils and to tackle discrimination. Fostering good relations is at the heart of the school's mission. This, alongside the provision of a broad, balanced and enriching curriculum, means that all groups of pupils benefit from high-quality learning experiences.
- A rich menu of sporting, performing arts and other activities are open to pupils at the end of the school day. These opportunities, along with St Sebastian's links with other schools across the world, pupils' charity work, a curriculum that allows pupils to explore other cultures and beliefs, and pupils' involvement in decisions that affect them, through the school council, contribute to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Senior leaders have directed the primary school sports premium effectively to improve opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of sporting activities both within and beyond the school day. This funding has enhanced pupils' experience, led some pupils to notable sporting success and is encouraging pupils to adopt healthy life styles.
- Senior leaders and governors are expertly channelling the additional funding the school receives through the pupil premium into a range of initiatives to support the education of disadvantaged pupils. As a consequence, this ethnically diverse group of pupils, irrespective of their starting points, make better progress than their peers nationwide and are achieving well.
- Senior and middle leaders' monitoring of classroom practice is rigorous. They regularly observe teachers at work in their classrooms. Consequently, they have a firm understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and use the expertise that exists across the federation to share good practice or help polish teachers' performance. As a result teaching is never less than consistently good with much that is outstanding.
- Performance management is used effectively to hold teachers to account for the standards achieved by their pupils. The outcomes of performance management are used by the headteacher and governors to make decisions about teachers' salary progression.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress by class teachers is thorough. Data on pupils' performance are collected regularly and analysed by the senior leader responsible for whole-school achievement. The data are then scrutinised on a pupil by pupil basis. Any pupil found not to be making progress in line with their challenging targets is then given extra help to get them back on track. Further, in Year 6, teachers use knowledge of their pupils' performance to set subject targets for the different ability groups in the class. These targets focus teachers' minds when they plan lessons and, as a consequence, raise pupils' expectations of what they can achieve.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are subject to robust checks by teachers within the federation and externally to make sure these assessments are both valid and reliable.
- Senior leaders know the school well and have a clear and accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development, which inform the priorities in the school development plan. However, the written evidence for this self-evaluation does not wholly reflect senior leaders' clarity of thought in this respect. Written self-evaluation does not emphasise, enough, the impact of the work they and their colleagues are doing to improve the school.
- The staff response to the Ofsted questionnaire is overwhelmingly positive about the leadership and management of the school. Further, most parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school is well led and managed. Inspectors concur with this view.
- The local authority provides only light touch support to this effective and high-achieving school; however, they do know the school well. Consequently, St Sebastian's is visited by professionals from other schools to learn about good practice. Further, the headteacher is currently providing effective support to the senior leadership teams in three other local primary schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body have a wide range of expertise in commerce and education.

Consequently, they have the necessary skills and experience to carry out their responsibilities in relation to the strategic direction of the school, monitoring and evaluating the school's effectiveness and holding the headteacher to account.

- They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are regular visitors to the school and are actively involved in collecting information about the school's performance, first hand. As a result their understanding of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement is both excellent and secure. They are knowledgeable about the positive impact that the sharing of good practice is having on teachers' performance both at St Sebastian's and St Cuthbert's and, in particular, how this strategy is maintaining high-quality teaching across the federation. However, they are in no doubt about how senior leaders would tackle any decline in a teacher's professional practice, should it occur.
- They use their knowledge and understanding of the school's performance to not only support senior leaders in their work but also to hold them to account for the standards achieved by the pupils.
- The pay policy committee of the governing body has oversight of any pay awards to staff and are clear about the link between a member of staff's pay progression and their performance.
- The governors' finance committee keep a close eye on school finances, including how the additional funding the school receives through the pupil premium and the primary school sports premium is spent and its ensuing impact. As a result they ensure that the school gains maximum value from these extra sources of income.
- Governors undertake appropriate training to make sure that their knowledge and expertise in education is up-to-date. For example, a number of governors have undertaken safer-recruitment training to ensure that they can fulfil their statutory obligations when recruiting staff.
- Governors ensure that their statutory responsibilities to keep pupils safe and secure are being met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming. They are proud members of the school community, wear their uniform with pride and treat the school environment with respect. This is evidenced by school buildings and grounds that are litter and graffiti free.
- The pupils live the school's mission of 'Only my best will do. Be kind to each other.' Their relationships with each other and the staff provide concrete evidence of this philosophy in action.
- Pupils invariably have very positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. This is reflected by the work in their books, which is neat, tidy and up-to-date. The myriad rewards available to pupils for good work and actions provide further incentive for them to do well.
- Behaviour is carefully monitored by class teachers. Teachers know their pupils well and take action, as appropriate, should they notice any individual who is displaying signs of vulnerability. The 'Oasis Room' is a designated area in school where children can go and have some quiet time away from the hustle and bustle of school life. Consequently, behaviour is extremely well managed and contributes to pupils feeling safe.
- All respondents to the staff questionnaire, and the parents who completed the online survey, agree that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved; inspectors agree.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Senior leaders have implemented robust systems for managing attendance. These include sending a text message to the parents of those children who fail to register, thereby minimising the risk to pupils' safety. As a result, attendance figures for St Sebastian's are well above national and similar schools' averages.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe and secure in school. They understand some of the different forms that bullying can take including acting negatively towards others of a different ethnic background or who are different in some way. Nevertheless, they expressed the opinion that bullying was not a concern at St Sebastian's and that should it occur they are confident that the staff would deal with it quickly and effectively.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and the harm caused by cyber-bullies.
- The school's checks on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children are rigorous. Staff

training in child protection is up-to-date and key policies and procedures are in place to maximise pupils' safety.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The standard of classroom practice has been maintained at the outstanding level it was at when the school was last inspected. Consequently, pupils continue to enjoy their learning, are appropriately challenged by the work they are given to do and are inspired to do well.
- Teachers plan their lessons carefully so that pupils of all abilities are suitably challenged and make rapid progress. Teachers question pupils skilfully to extend their thinking and deepen their understanding. The open-ended nature of these questions demand extended answers from pupils and, as a result, develops their oral skills effectively.
- Teaching assistants are effectively deployed as active participants in pupils' learning, guiding pupils to find things out for themselves. As a result, pupils are becoming more confident learners who are able to take risks without fear of failure.
- Teachers monitor pupils' progress in lessons carefully. This enables teachers to pick-up pupils' misconceptions and deal with them, or increase the degree of challenge when pupils have clearly grasped an idea. In any event, teachers adjust their plans, as appropriate, in order to maximise pupils' learning.
- Teachers plan learning so that pupils have opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum. This makes a substantial contribution to pupils' progress in these two key areas. For example, inspectors observed the positive contribution that a Spanish lesson in Year 6 made to pupils' developing numeracy skills. Inspectors also saw evidence of pupils being given the opportunity to practise their reading and writing skills across a range of subjects.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' books is regular and informative, with pupils actively engaging in a dialogue with their teachers about improving their work. This approach positively impacts on pupils' rapid progress.
- Almost all parents who expressed an opinion on Parent View agreed that their child is well taught. Inspection evidence strongly supports this opinion.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils achieve exceptionally well and reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6. Given pupils' starting points this represents outstanding performance. Consequently, they are very well prepared to start their secondary education once they leave St Sebastian's.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the phonics screening test at the end of Year 1 has been above average for the last two years. Further, there was no appreciable difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in the school, on this test, and both groups outperformed their peers across the country, bucking the national trend. Similarly, the attainment of both boys and girls exceeded that of their peers countrywide. When asked, pupils said they enjoyed reading, and reading is promoted well across the school.
- Strengths in the teaching of mathematics, at Key Stage 1, resulted in just under half of all pupils attaining at the highest Level 3 at the end of Year 2 last year. This represents significantly above-average attainment in this subject, as was the case in 2013.
- Last year, the gap in attainment, at Key Stage 2, between boys and girls was narrower than that found nationally and the attainment of both groups was above that of their peers across the country. Similarly, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs attained well and in line with challenging targets.
- In 2014 almost all groups of pupils including boys, girls, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs made significantly above average progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in the core National Curriculum subjects. This placed the school in the top 5% of all schools nationally on this measure.
- As a result of consistently high-quality teaching and effective use of the extra funding the school receives from the pupil premium, disadvantaged pupils left St Sebastian's one and a half terms ahead of their peers across the country in reading and writing and about one term ahead in mathematics. This represents outstanding attainment for disadvantaged students of all abilities and backgrounds and excellent progress from their differing starting points. However, even though disadvantaged pupils

achieved well, their peers in the school did better still and an in-school gap in attainment, between the two groups, remains. As a consequence, disadvantaged pupils left Key Stage 2 a term behind their peers in the school in mathematics and reading. However, both groups attained equally well in writing.

- Inspectors' observations of teaching, scrutiny of the work in pupils' books and the school's current progress data show that all groups of pupils continue to achieve well and make rapid progress against challenging, aspirational targets.
- The most able pupils achieve well. This group's attainment is at least in line with that of their peers across the country in all three core subjects but, in 2014 they made substantially better progress.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and appropriately focused with learning activities matched to children's needs. Consequently, given their starting points, children make rapid progress in their understanding of the world, literacy, numeracy and expressive arts.
- The indoor and outdoor areas are well resourced with a wide range of equipment, allowing the children to make their own decisions about what they want to play with, developing their independence and stimulating their imaginations.
- Where activities are led by adults, the children undertake these with enthusiasm and are motivated and stimulated by what they are given to do. Consequently, demonstrating excellent and effective behaviour for learning.
- There is an appropriate balance between adult-led and activities chosen by children, which takes into consideration the age, ability and experience of the children. As a result children make rapid progress, from their varying starting points, in their personal, social, emotional and physical development.
- Teaching is always at least good and often outstanding. Consistent with the rest of the school, the staff's expectations of what the children can achieve are high and the children are encouraged to have a positive attitude to their learning by being given opportunities to play, explore and be creative. As a result they develop, quickly, effective learning habits.
- The children quickly become accustomed to daily routines. This enables smooth transitions between activities and maximises learning time.
- The children's behaviour is excellent. They play and work together harmoniously in a safe and secure environment. Their impeccable behaviour was exemplified in the school's religious service for St Sebastian, the school's patron saint. A group of children from the early years class displayed due reverence, participated in the service as appropriate and followed their teachers' instructions without question. Their ability to sit quietly and engage with what was going on around them clearly showed their readiness for the more formal learning environment they will meet in Year 1.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust and effective arrangements for ensuring the welfare of the children are in place. Nevertheless, children are encouraged, increasingly, to take greater responsibility for their own self-care and reduce their reliance on the adults who work with them, promoting their physical development.
- The early years provision is very well led and managed. The staff work effectively as a team with a common sense of purpose and a collective drive to ensure that all children have the opportunity to learn and develop and are made ready for Key Stage 1.
- The leader responsible for this aspect of the school has an accurate understanding of the strengths of the provision and those areas that require further development, which are clearly identified in the school development plan and being acted upon.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104664
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	453264

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Laird
Headteacher	Dennis Hardiman
Date of previous school inspection	3 April 2008
Telephone number	0151 260 9697
Fax number	0151 260 5679
Email address	sebastians-ao@st-sebastians.liverpool.sch.uk

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