

St John's Catholic Junior School

Old Chester Road, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside, CH63 7LH

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From their starting points, almost all pupils make good progress throughout the school and achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are above average.
- Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and is good. Pupils enjoy lessons and are eager to learn. This is having a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Pupils are extremely polite and well-mannered to each other and to adults. The behaviour of pupils and their attitudes to learning are good.
- This is a very inclusive school where every pupil is equally valued and cared for well.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and parents overwhelmingly support this view.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a broad and interesting range of subjects and topics that ensures that they enjoy school. This contributes well to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher provides very effective leadership and direction that is moving the school forward quickly.
- School leaders and the governing body know the school well and are clearly focussed on the continued improvement of teaching and raising pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' expectations are not always high enough. As a result, work is sometimes not hard enough and lacks the challenge to ensure pupils always make as much progress as possible.
- Pupils' progress as they learn is not always checked swiftly enough to make adjustments when work is too easy.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 12 part-lessons. Three lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors also visited several classrooms to look closely at the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation including minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan, documents relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding and the school's data on pupils' progress.
- Inspectors talked with pupils and listened to some pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with staff and six members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 31 responses from parents recorded in the online questionnaire (Parent View), three letters from parents and the 110 responses to a parental survey carried out by the school in the autumn of 2013. Inspectors also had informal conversations with some parents at the end of the school day.
- The inspectors took account of the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

Alan Parkinson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patricia Cope

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John's Catholic Junior is an average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average. The proportion of pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is similar to the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is slightly above the national average. The proportion of those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school operates a breakfast club and after-school club in conjunction with the neighbouring infant school.
- The school uses Orrets Meadow School to provide support for a small number of pupils.
- In April 2014, the school achieved the Eco-Schools Green Flag award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, to raise pupils' achievement further, by ensuring that:
 - activities are planned to meet pupils' needs more closely and teachers' expectations of pupils, whatever their ability, are always high enough
 - checks are carried out as pupils work and adjustments made to ensure that their work is always sufficiently challenging.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From their broadly average starting points in Year 3, pupils' make good progress through Key Stage 2 and reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6.
- The results of national tests in 2013 showed the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level in mathematics and reading fell slightly because teaching in some classes had not been fully effective. However, the school has taken swift action to address this and the progress made by pupils in mathematics and reading has accelerated. A review of books, school data and the 2014 unvalidated results show by the end of Year 6 the proportion of pupils making the progress expected of them is above average, and more pupils now make more than the progress expected of them in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Pupils say they enjoy reading. In September 2013, a new whole-school reading programme was successfully introduced. As a result, teaching is more effective and is improving reading skills well and supporting pupils' learning across a range of subjects and topics. When necessary, pupils make good use of their skills in phonics (linking letters to the sounds that they make) to help them read difficult words.
- Improvements in teaching mathematics have increased pupils' skills and they use these effectively to solve problems. The new reading programme has also raised attainment in writing as pupils apply their skills in other subjects. Work is neat and accurate and structured well using paragraphs.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar and sometimes more progress than their classmates. This is because the targeted support they receive from teaching assistants and other adults is helping to develop their literacy and numeracy skills well.
- Those pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals make similar progress and sometimes better progress than their peers. In 2013, pupils receiving support through the pupil premium were, on average, 10 months behind other pupils in mathematics and reading, and seven months behind in writing. By the end of Year 6, in 2014, unvalidated data indicates that the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is approximately five months behind other pupils in mathematics and four months behind in reading and writing. This shows that the gaps are closing because of the effective use of the funds to provide additional support for individual pupils.
- The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are welcomed to the school and make similar progress as their classmates.
- Test results show a rise in the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels and the most able pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, at times the challenge for these pupils is not always sufficient to enable them to make as much progress as possible.
- Pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning are quickly identified and additional support is provided which enables them to develop their literacy and numeracy skills well.
- The few pupils who sometimes continue their learning at places away from school receive good support and achieve well.

The quality of teaching is good

- The vast majority of parents believe that the quality of teaching is good and inspectors agree with this view.
- Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and feel that they are taught well. One pupil said, 'There's always something fun going on!' They are keen to learn and work well. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson where pupils were learning about fractions, the activities sustained pupils' interests and they enjoyed the challenge and made at least good progress.

- The sharpness of teachers' questioning makes pupils think and they learn well because they have time to share and develop their ideas. Tasks capture pupils' imagination and sustain their interest so that learning is enjoyable and effective.
- Evidence from observations and work in pupils' books, indicates that teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, the work planned for some pupils, whatever their ability, including the most able, is sometimes too easy. Checks made as pupils work are not always carried out effectively and so work is not always adjusted swiftly enough to ensure pupils are challenged to make the best progress.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked. Teachers use praise effectively to encourage pupils and provide written comments that tell pupils what they need to do to improve. Pupils' also review their marked work and the vast majority respond well by writing their own comments in their books. This is followed up by teachers in subsequent work to ensure that pupils learn from their mistakes.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for lower-ability pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This enables them to make progress that is consistent with other pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in lessons and around the school. They understand and value the rewards and sanctions system where any poor behaviour can result in losing 'Golden Time'. As a result, pupils say behaviour throughout the school is good and is getting better.
- Pupils are extremely polite, well-mannered and courteous towards each other, adults and visitors.
- Pupils are fully aware of the different forms of bullying. They report that bullying is rare and any instances are quickly resolved. Pupils feel confident to talk to an adult if they have any concerns.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils behave sensibly and safely in the playground at breaks and are well supervised by staff. They say they feel safe because they are well cared for by teachers and other adults.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and learn about road safety, how to use the internet safely and about how far they can trust people. During the inspection, some Year 6 pupils were taking part in cycling proficiency and were learning how to ride their bicycles safely.
- The responses to Parent View and to the parental survey carried out by the school are very positive. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that their children are well cared for and feel safe at school.
- The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop as responsible individuals. For example, some pupils make a significant contribution to the school community by taking on positions of responsibility such as the school council, eco-council or as leaders to organise activities at lunch time. Pupils raise money for charities such as Mission Together, CAFOD, Children in Need and the Christmas Shoe Box appeal.
- Effective partnerships with parents and external agencies ensure that pupils who display any cause for concern are identified early and that appropriate support is provided. The school's support for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable is very effective.
- The school's provision of the before-school and after-school clubs is good. These sessions, in a caring and secure setting, offer a range of activities enjoyed by the pupils.
- Attendance is in line with the national average. The school's work to reduce the number of persistent absences and to improve attendance has been effective. Punctuality is good and reflects well on pupils' positive attitudes towards learning and their enjoyment of school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body know the school well. They have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The strong focus on improving teaching and learning has resulted in an upward trend in attainment and achievement.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and has had a significant impact on the higher standards, a view that is supported by staff, parents and governors.
- Subject leaders make an effective contribution to the school's improvement and performance by checking and improving the provision, teaching and pupils' progress in their subject areas.
- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and any weaker teaching has been eradicated. Rigorous checks on the quality of teaching are followed up with accurate feedback to teachers so that they know how to improve. This information is being used well to provide a relevant programme of staff training and the impact is clear in the rise in standards.
- The school's systems for checking pupils' progress are robust. The school uses data from checking the progress of individual pupils to identify any areas of underachievement and provides additional support when required. These checks on progress are not always as effective as they might be and leads to some pupils not getting the advice they need to ensure they make as much progress as possible. Teachers are set targets based on pupils' progress and any pay awards are linked to the achievement of these targets.
- Pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning are quickly identified and additional support is provided. This shows the school's commitment to offering equality of opportunity for all its pupils.
- The curriculum provides pupils with an interesting range of subjects and topics that ensures that they enjoy school. This contributes very effectively to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. The school provides a variety of activities to enrich pupils' experiences. For example, Year 5 pupils recently attended the Royal Shakespeare Festival at the Liverpool Playhouse where they took part in a performance of Macbeth that helped them with their literacy topic. These activities, together with a range of extra-curricular activities, develop pupils' academic and social skills well.
- The school has made good use of the new primary sport funding to provide additional sporting activities including, for example, dance, cricket and athletics. As a result, more pupils now take part in physical activities and are developing new skills in a range of sports. In addition, specialists work alongside teachers to coach and develop teaching skills so that they can teach physical education well. This is contributing effectively to develop healthy lifestyles and physical well-being for pupils.
- Following the previous inspection in 2012, the school has benefited from very effective and valuable support from the local authority to raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Due to the effectiveness of school leaders' actions, which resulted in good progress being made, this support was withdrawn in July 2013. The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.
- Safeguarding procedures and policies meet statutory requirements. Effective procedures are in place to protect pupils. Appropriate risk assessments are conducted and action taken if a concern arises.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows the school well from the information it receives. As a result, governors effectively challenge and support leaders. They review data and compare the progress of pupils with the national picture. As a result, governors are aware the dip from previous years has been resolved and have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further. Governors check the quality of teaching and are aware of the links between the quality of work that staff do and the arrangements for pay progression. The governing body has a good knowledge of the school's finances. This includes the governors being aware of the positive impact of the use of the pupil premium funding to provide additional resources and opportunities for those eligible pupils to develop their basic skills and keep up with their peers.

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	105080
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	442360

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe McCardle
Headteacher	Elaine Mullins
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2012
Telephone number	0151 6459615
Fax number	0151 6456673
Email address	schooloffice@st-johns-junior.wirral.sch.uk

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