

Inspection of St Sebastian's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Holly Road, Liverpool, Merseyside L7 0LH

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 December 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since January 2015. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils value the caring relationships that they have with staff. Pupils trust that staff will help them if they have any worries or concerns. This helps pupils to feel happy at school.

Children in the early years settle in and quickly develop positive learning behaviours. Pupils throughout the school build securely on these firm foundations. They are attentive in lessons and keen to share their thoughts and opinions. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), respond positively to the school's high expectations for their academic success. They achieve well.

Pupils behave well. They are kind and considerate towards each other. They play sociably at breaktimes. Pupils take on leadership roles as 'active play leaders' and 'buddies'. They encourage physical activity and help younger pupils resolve any minor disputes. Pupils take pride in these additional responsibilities. This promotes their self-esteem and confidence.

Pupils take full advantage of the wide range of activities the school provides for them. These include sports, choir, drama and board games clubs. These opportunities introduce pupils to new hobbies and develop their talents. Pupils love making a positive difference in the local community. For example, the choir sings to residents in nearby care homes, and children work together to fundraise for local charities.

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

The school prioritises the development of the curriculum to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. This work has ensured that many subject curriculums are coherent and well ordered. In the early years, the school has thought carefully about the building blocks of knowledge that help children to learn over time.

In the main, staff know the important learning they need to focus on. However, in some subjects, the school's curriculum thinking requires further precision. This makes it difficult for teachers to design learning activities to cover all the subject knowledge that pupils need for future learning. This also hinders teachers from checking how well pupils are learning. As a result, some pupils do not learn and remember the intended curriculum as well as they could in these subjects.

The school quickly identifies pupils' additional needs. It ensures that any barriers to pupils' learning are carefully considered. Staff use a range of approaches to help pupils with SEND to access the curriculum successfully. They achieve well. Pupils with SEND told inspectors they appreciate the ways that staff and their classmates support them in lessons.

The school has made sure that reading is a priority. Children in early years have daily phonics lessons and many other reading activities. This helps to develop their ability to read and supports their love of reading. This approach continues as pupils move into Year 1. Staff are experts at spotting any pupils who fall behind in their reading knowledge.

They provide effective additional support. This has a positive impact. Most pupils can read with increasing fluency and confidence by the end of Year 2.

There is a calm and orderly atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils move around the school sensibly. They are polite and welcoming, displaying courtesy towards staff and visitors. In lessons, staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. For pupils who may find this challenging, there are strategies in place to support them to manage their feelings.

Pupils' personal development is promoted through the curriculum, assemblies and other opportunities. Pupils learn about different cultures and a range of social and moral issues. This helps to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Older pupils recognise what constitutes a healthy relationship. They also talk maturely about the importance of equality. Pupils are taught about ways to maintain their physical and mental health. They spoke to inspectors about the value of positive affirmations and finding ways to relax.

The school is resolute in its approach to securing pupils' regular attendance. It has taken effective action to reduce the number of pupils who are absent from school too often. As a result, these pupils' rates of attendance are improving.

Governors are deeply committed to the school and the community it serves. They visit regularly and support school events. Several governors volunteer in the school, for example by listening to pupils read. However, the governing body does not have oversight of some important aspects of the school's work. This means the governing body does not hold the school to account with sufficient rigour.

The new leadership team has quickly and accurately identified the most important issues that need to be addressed. Staff speak positively about the supportive teamwork in the school. They know leaders consider their workload, for example when they introduce changes to the curriculum. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the key knowledge pupils need to know and remember has not been identified precisely enough. This hampers teachers from designing suitable learning and from checking that pupils have secured the knowledge necessary for subsequent learning. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure teachers are clear on the essential knowledge pupils should learn in these subjects.
- The governing body does not have robust strategic oversight of the quality of

education this school provides. This means it does not appropriately challenge or hold the school to account sufficiently well. The governing body should focus attention on its core duties so it can support the school more effectively in its improvement work.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	104664
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10347896
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	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Moloney
Headteacher	Gillian Murphy (Interim Executive Headteacher) Joanne McCormick (Acting Headteacher)
Website	www.stsebastiansliverpool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 January 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has undergone significant changes in staffing.
- 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 governing body.
- 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.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in January 2020. The next inspection is expected to take place in the academic year 2025/26.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and with members of staff. The lead inspector held discussions with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. They also spoke with representatives of the diocese and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: design and technology, early reading and mathematics. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other curriculum subjects. They spoke with leaders and pupils. Inspectors reviewed samples of pupils' work in these curriculum areas.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- An inspector visited the before-school provision.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including records of governing body meetings, leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also spoke with some parents and carers during the inspection.

Inspection team

Sharon Cowey, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Littler

Ofsted Inspector

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