

Inspection of St John Vianney Catholic Primary School

Elton Head Road, Sutton Heath, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 5BT

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 March 2022

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

What is it like to attend this school?

The members of the new senior leadership team have turned the fortunes of this school around in a timely manner. Pupils, including children in the early years, are now getting a good deal, academically, socially and emotionally.

Staff expect pupils to try their best and achieve well. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well across a range of subjects. Teachers strive to make learning interesting and fun for pupils.

Most pupils are keen to learn. They make friends easily. Pupils are happy and feel safe at school. Staff care about pupils and will listen to them if they have any worries or concerns.

Mostly, pupils are kind and friendly to each other and visitors. They behave well. Staff act as positive role models. They lead by example and pupils follow. Pupils told inspectors that, if bullying does happen, staff are quick to deal with it. At breaktimes, pupils play happily with their friends.

Pupils contribute to the life of the school as members of the school council, eco warriors and reading ambassadors. They are particularly proud of their efforts to raise money for charitable causes.

Parents and carers are delighted with all aspects of the school's work. They typically commented about their children flourishing under the school's care and guidance.

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

Since the previous inspection, the members of the new senior leadership team, together with staff, have designed a curriculum that is ambitious and meets the needs of pupils. Pupils access all subjects outlined in the national curriculum.

Subject leaders are clear about the knowledge and skills that they want pupils to acquire from the early years to Year 6. Leaders provide appropriate guidance to teachers about what content should be taught and when this should be delivered.

Staff have accessed training to ensure that they have the necessary expertise to teach a wide range of subjects. Subject leaders are effective in ensuring that the intended curriculum is being delivered in practice.

Teachers present new learning well. They use assessment strategies such as quizzes and questioning effectively, to ensure that pupils have understood previous learning. Teachers provide explanations that are clear and succinct. For example, in history, teachers clearly explain the difference between primary and secondary sources in order to clarify pupils' understanding. Inspectors observed pupils who listened well in class and were engaged in their learning.

Many pupils can recall past and current learning. For example, older pupils talked enthusiastically about their knowledge of the Egyptians and the Vikings. However, due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, in a small number of subjects, a few pupils have forgotten some essential knowledge that they have learned previously. This prevents pupils from making links with earlier learning and achieving as well as they should. Leaders are in the process of ensuring that subject curriculums address pupils' missing learning.

Pupils enjoy reading. In the early years, children are introduced to the joys of stories, rhymes and poems as soon as they start at school. Staff in the Nursery and the Reception classes take every opportunity to develop children's language skills.

There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics, which starts in the early years. Well-trained staff deliver the school's phonics programme effectively. The books that pupils read are closely matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils who are struggling to read, including pupils in key stage 2, are given extra support to help them catch up. Older pupils talked confidently about their favourite authors and the different types of books that they like to read.

Leaders have made significant improvements to the library. They have filled the shelves with high-quality texts, some of which deepen pupils' knowledge of other subjects, such as history, science and geography. However, in some other areas of the school, such as in some classrooms, leaders have not ensured that resources are used sufficiently well to entice pupils to read for pleasure.

The needs of pupils with SEND, including those in the early years, are identified quickly. They learn alongside their friends and benefit from additional support and specialist resources. Leaders work closely with outside agencies to ensure that these pupils get the support that they need.

Leaders plan a wide range of carefully considered activities beyond the academic curriculum. This includes an exciting range of trips and activities after school. Regular visitors to the school help pupils learn about the local and wider community. Pupils understand the importance of taking regular exercise and eating a balanced diet to promote their good health. They are made aware of differences, such as same-sex families, in an age-appropriate and meaningful way. Pupils' mental health and well-being are promoted well.

Governors are proud of the school. Some governors are new to their roles and have been unable to access training because of the pandemic. Governors are aware of the school's key priorities. However, although improving, the level of challenge they offer to senior leaders is not appropriately robust.

Most staff enjoy working at the school and feel well supported by senior leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff have regular safeguarding training. This ensures that staff are fully alert to the possible signs of abuse and neglect. Staff report concerns to leaders quickly. Safeguarding leaders deal with any concerns in a timely manner, following all appropriate guidance.

Leaders work closely with external agencies to protect pupils and their families. Through the curriculum, pupils learn about situations that may cause them harm. For example, pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe when online. They also know what makes a good friend.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, some pupils have forgotten aspects of essential knowledge that they need. This prevents them from making links with prior learning and developing a sufficiently deep body of subject knowledge. Leaders should continue their work to ensure that subject curriculums address pupils' missing learning, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will allow pupils to build a firm foundation for future learning and deepen their understanding of subjects over time.
- Leaders have not ensured that the resources in some parts of the school support teachers to promote a real love of reading among pupils. This hinders teachers in further developing some pupils' interest in reading. Leaders should ensure that reading is promoted consistently well throughout the school. This will help to ensure that pupils take an even greater interest in becoming avid readers.
- The level of challenge offered by governors is not sufficiently robust. Members of the governing body should ensure that they are fully equipped and skilled enough to ask deep and probing questions about all aspects of the school's work, with a particular focus on the quality of education. This will ensure that leaders are provided with an appropriate level of challenge.

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	104812
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10211688
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	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Denise Liptrot
Headteacher	Anne-Louise Friar
Website	www.stjohnvianneyprimary.com
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leader have been appointed.
- School leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- This school is a Roman Catholic primary school and is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in March 2019.

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 met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of staff.

- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority.
- The team inspector met with a representative of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. Inspectors spoke to staff about safeguarding and about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school, in class, in the dining hall and in the outdoor play area.
- The team inspector talked with parents as they brought their children to school. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and to Ofsted's survey for staff and the pupils' survey.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives into early reading, mathematics, history and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at examples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.

Inspection team

Sheila Iwaskow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michelle Joyce

Ofsted Inspector

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