St COLUMBA'S Catholic Primary School
Lickey Road, Rednal, Birmingham, B45 8TD

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall effectiveness</th>
<th>Previous inspection:</th>
<th>This inspection:</th>
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<td>Inadequate</td>
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<td>Leadership and management</td>
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<td>Behaviour and safety of pupils</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of teaching</td>
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<td>Achievement of pupils</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early years provision</td>
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Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The executive headteacher and staff have worked together well to strengthen all aspects of the school’s work.
- The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher expect other leaders, teachers and teaching assistants to help pupils achieve well.
- Leaders’ and governors’ arrangements for checking the work of staff and pupils’ achievement are effective and contributing to continuous improvement in teaching and pupils’ learning.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils, the disabled and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates.
- Teaching has strengthened significantly. School records and work in pupils’ books shows that teaching is usually good and some is outstanding.
- Teachers plan activities that are interesting, motivate pupils and encourage positive attitudes to learning.
- Provision in the early years is effective. Children make good progress in the Reception class.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development is well promoted. They are kind, polite and respectful towards others. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school.
- Staff are caring and take pupils’ concerns seriously. This helps pupils feel safe in school.
- Attendance has significantly improved and is above average.
- The interim executive board (IEB) uses its skills well to provide a good level of support and challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes the most-able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Although pupils appreciate cultural and religious diversity, their understanding of other faiths is not extensive.
Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils’ learning in 10 lessons, nine of which were jointly observed with the executive headteacher.
- In addition to lesson observations, the inspector listened to some pupils read, briefly visited reading sessions in Key Stage 2, and reviewed examples of pupils’ work in different subjects.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the interim executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other leaders, the Chair of the IEB, and a local authority representative.
- The inspector spoke informally to parents and carers and observed lunchtime and playtime activities.
- A number of documents were examined. They included: records of the checks made on teaching and pupils’ learning, the school improvement plan, information about pupils’ achievement, and records relating to behaviour and safeguarding.
- There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) for these to be made available to inspectors.

Inspection team

Usha Devi, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector
Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- One in four pupils in the school are disabled or have special educational needs, an above-average, proportion compared nationally.
- A higher-than-average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in care). Half the pupils in the school are eligible for the pupil premium.
- Almost three quarters of pupils are White British, with the remainder from a number of other heritage groups.
- The school’s Early Years Foundation Stage has one full-time Reception class.
- The 2014 end of Key Stage 2 provisional results show that the school meets the government’s current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress.
- At its last inspection in May 2013, the school was placed in special measures. Since this inspection, there have been a number of changes in staffing.
- The local authority arranged for the current executive headteacher, who is also the headteacher of St John and Monica Catholic Primary School to join the school in November 2013 as an interim headteacher. She then initiated the school to school support and asked staff from St John and Monica to support the staff at St Columba’s.
- In November 2013, an IEB was appointed to provide governance for the school.
- In July 2013 three teachers left the school.
- In September 2014, the interim headteacher was appointed as the executive headteacher. At the same time five new teachers joined the school. One teacher joined as an assistant headteacher with specific responsibility for leading improvements in English. Another was given responsibility for helping teachers to improve their skills.
- A senior teacher from St John and Monica is currently responsible for leading improvements in teaching and learning in the early years provision. She also works alongside the usual Reception class teacher for part of the week. At the time of this inspection, this senior teacher was teaching full time in the Reception class.
- St Columba’s recently received an academy order from the Department of Education. It is expected to become part of a multi-academy trust in 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the most-able pupils in all classes make rapid progress by making sure that all teachers:
  - provide them with sufficiently challenging activities
  - move these pupils’ on to more suitably challenging work as soon as they are ready.
- Deepen pupils’ understanding of faiths and beliefs that are different from their own.
Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher has high expectations of pupils and staff. She has worked well with other senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and other staff to create a culture where there is equality of opportunity for all, where pupils achieve well and feel proud to be part of the school community.

- The deputy headteacher provides the executive headteacher with strong support. She is instrumental in helping to raise the achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The deputy headteacher keeps a close check on those pupils’ achievement to ensure they receive appropriate support.

- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well because additional government funding is used effectively. For instance, it is used to provide pupils with additional teaching in small groups or individually and this has helped pupils to achieve well.

- Systems for managing the performance of staff have strengthened since the previous inspection. The leaders with responsibility for helping teachers to improve their skills in science, mathematics and English, work alongside the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher to regularly check the work of other staff and review pupils’ work. They focus on the difference teachers are making to pupils of different abilities and clearly identify what teachers need to do to help pupils make even faster progress. Additionally, when any issues are identified, they follow these up promptly. This approach is helping teachers to refine their practice.

- The primary sports funding is used well. Pupils regularly take part in after-school sports clubs and sporting events. The funding is also used to help older pupils improve their swimming skills. The vast majority of pupils in Years 5 and 6 are now able to swim with confidence.

- Teachers effectively encourage pupils to listen to the views of others and sensibly discuss any differences of opinions before making decisions. Visits to Birmingham Council House and the Houses of Parliament help older pupils to understand the British democratic process.

- Pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development is effectively promoted through the curriculum. Pupils especially enjoy the ‘topic days’. Year 6 pupils are keen to talk about their Victorian themed topic day when they dress up as Victorians. They told the inspector that teachers help them to understand what life was like for children at this time and that they enjoyed working together to bake Victorian sponge cakes.

- Parents who spoke with the inspector were overwhelmingly supportive of the changes that have taken place in the school. School leaders are taking appropriate steps to involve parents more with their children’s learning.

- Since the previous inspection, the local authority has arranged for staff to receive a good level of support, and also provided effective challenge through regular reviews of the school’s work. The support from the headteacher and staff of St John and St Monica has helped to secure the necessary improvements in pupils’ achievement and teaching.

- Senior leaders have accurately identified key strengths and the aspects requiring improvement. They are aware, for instance, that some teachers do not always help the most-able pupils make rapid progress. They are planning on giving these teachers the opportunity to observe colleagues that are particularly strong at helping this group of pupils reach high standards.

- The school actively promotes tolerance, respect towards others, and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity. Nevertheless, school leaders acknowledge that further work is required to help deepen pupils’ understanding of the faiths and beliefs of people that are different from their own.

- The governance of the school:
The Chair of the IEB and other members use their experience and expertise well to support leaders and to check how well different groups of pupils are achieving. They are able to compare the achievement of pupils in the school with pupils’ nationally.

– The IEB knows what the quality of teaching is across the school. Members ensure that decisions about teachers’ pay are closely linked to teachers’ performance and pupils’ progress.

– Members of the IEB keep a close check on additional funding, such as the pupil premium, to ensure it is used effectively.

– The IEB ensures that school policies are kept up to date and procedures for keeping pupils safe meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

– The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and considerate towards each other and adults.

– Staff place a strong emphasis on teaching moral and social values. They deter discrimination by making sure everyone regardless of their gender, age and heritage is treated with respect. This makes a strong contribution to good behaviour in lessons and around school. Pupils told the inspector that incidents of bullying, racism and name-calling are rare. School records confirm that such incidents are infrequent and are dealt with effectively.

– In lessons, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They listen carefully to teachers and teaching assistants, respond promptly to instructions and work well with each other.

– They appreciate and look forward to receiving certificates that reward both their behaviour and effort in lessons. Pupils spoke particularly positively about the, ‘super star’, ‘mathematician of the week’, and ‘writer of the week’ awards.

– Pupils walk around school and up and down stairs calmly. They hold doors open for each other and greet each other with a smile. Pupils help to keep their classrooms tidy and are aware of the importance of looking after the school grounds and helping to keep them clean.

– During break times, pupils of all ages play together well. They value the work of the play leader who organises a range of activities, and the lunchtime supervisors who respond to any concerns they may have.

– Attendance has improved markedly. It is now above the national average for primary schools. Staff keep a close check on the attendance of individual pupils so that any issues can be addressed quickly. The school has in place a range of rewards to reward those that attend regularly.

– Pupils told the inspector that there is a very small minority of pupils that ‘fall out’ with each other and that this can occasionally lead to ‘fights’ during break time. School leaders are working well with a range of agencies to help this small number of pupils behave appropriately at all times.

– At the start of this term, school leaders introduced an electronic system for collating behavioural incidents from across the school. They have started to analyse this information so that they can identify any patterns and trends.

Safety

– The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.

– ‘Our school is like a family, where we all look after each other,’ commented one pupil, reflecting the views of a number pupils and parents that spoke with the inspector. Pupils state that they feel safe in school because staff listen to and act upon their concerns. Inspection findings endorsed parents’ and pupils’ positive views.
Procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils are thorough. For instance, regular first aid and child protection training for staff ensures they are alert to any potential risks.

Pupils of all ages have a good understanding of road and fire safety. Older pupils recognise the importance of using the internet carefully and also know what to do if they want to report any issues. Younger pupils’ awareness of internet safety is developing steadily because teachers in Key Stage 1 are increasingly incorporating this aspect of safety into their teaching.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved significantly. Teaching is now usually good, with some that is outstanding as confirmed by the school’s own records and work in pupils’ books. Teachers have benefited from working alongside staff from St John and Monica and the teacher with responsibility for helping teachers to improve their skills.

- Good relationships between pupils and staff contribute to a positive atmosphere for learning. Pupils respond particularly well to praise.

- Resources are frequently used effectively to enthuse and capture pupils’ interest. In one instance, the teacher used ‘Bugsy’ the puppet to teach Year 2 pupils about the importance of keeping teeth clean, avoiding foods with a high-sugar content and visiting the dentist regularly. Pupils were highly motivated and engaged when the teacher spoke to the whole class.

- Teachers and teaching assistants use questions well to check pupils’ understanding and to encourage pupils to provide in-depth explanations.

- Pupils’ work is regularly marked. Teachers provide helpful advice. This enables pupils to correct their errors.

- Teachers help pupils understand what they are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. Pupils use this information well to review their own and others’ work and to check what they need to do to improve their work.

- Where teaching is particularly strong, teachers have high expectations of how much pupils are expected to learn and of the presentation of pupils’ work. In these classes, different groups of pupils produce work of a consistently high standard.

- Teachers use sessions specifically dedicated to the sounds that letters make (phonics) and other reading activities to effectively develop pupils’ reading skills and to encourage pupils to read for pleasure. Pupils enjoy reading both at school and home.

- Good-quality writing by pupils is celebrated through displays around the school and in classrooms. Pupils use grammar and punctuation correctly when they write because of the high focus staff place on these aspects. Pupils are getting much better at using their phonetic knowledge to spell correctly. Themes for writing are carefully selected so that they interest both boys and girls. For instance, pupils in Year 4 particularly enjoyed learning and writing about the Vikings.

- Previously weak teaching in mathematics has left gaps in pupils’ mathematical skills and knowledge. Teachers are aware of this and carefully plan activities that help pupils to make up for gaps in learning. They also give pupils regular opportunities to deepen and extend their mathematical skills and knowledge through activities which require pupils to solve complex problems.

- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are provided with activities that are well matched to their learning needs. Teachers and teaching assistants frequently check their learning during lessons to ensure they receive prompt and timely support.
Teachers are aware of the specific learning needs of disadvantaged pupils and plan activities that successfully build on what they already understand.

Most teachers make sure that the activities they plan for the most-able pupils help them make good and often better progress. However, this is not the case in every class. Sometimes they are asked to produce 'more' work rather than complete activities that will increase their understanding or build on their previous skills. Occasionally, most-able pupils spend too long on activities that are easy rather than being moved on to more challenging activities during lessons.

The achievement of pupils is good

Pupils’ achievement has improved. Pupils, including those from different heritage groups, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Children start the Reception class with levels of knowledge and understanding that are below to those typical for their age. Children make good progress in all areas of learning. By the end of Reception, children's skills and knowledge are similar to those expected. Last year, an above-average proportion attained a good level of development.

In the 2014 national phonics check at the end of Year 1, the proportion of pupils that reached the expected level was higher than the national average. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use their knowledge of sounds and letters to read difficult words confidently. By the time pupils are in Year 2 they are able to read fluently and with expression.

Standards rose in 2014 with a higher proportion of pupils in Years 2 and 6 reaching average standards and above for their age groups in reading, writing and mathematics than in the past.

At the end of Year 6 in 2014, standards were above the national average in mathematics and writing and in line with the national average in reading.

The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels at the end of Year 2 was above the national average in writing and similar to the national average in reading and mathematics. The proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the higher levels was greater than the national average in writing and mathematics. It was the same as the national figure in reading.

Last academic year, pupils in Year 6 made good progress. However, for some groups of pupils this was not enough to help them make up for limited progress in the past. The 2014 results reflected the impact of this legacy of underachievement on some groups of pupils.

In 2014, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school increased from the previous year. They were almost four terms behind in mathematics, one term in reading and half a term in writing. In comparison to pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils in the school were one term behind in mathematics and reading. In contrast, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and pupils nationally closed in writing. Their attainment in writing matched that of pupils nationally.

In 2014, a very small minority of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in Year 6 did not make enough progress in mathematics from their starting points in Year 2. In contrast, they made expected progress in reading and writing.

School leaders have taken decisive action to close the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers and to ensure disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make faster progress. Senior leaders meet regularly with teachers to discuss the performance of all pupils. Together they discuss the precise actions that will be taken by the class teacher. The school's latest information and work in pupils’ books show that these pupils are achieving well from their different starting points.

The achievement of disadvantaged pupils across the school is now the same as and, sometimes, better than that of their peers.
Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs currently make good progress. They receive effective help when working individually and in small groups. Teachers and teaching assistants also provide them with suitable equipment to help them complete their activities successfully.

The most-able pupils make good and sometimes better progress overtime. Nevertheless, in a few classes there are occasions when teachers do not ensure these pupils are sufficiently challenged. When this happens, they do not make rapid gains in their learning.

**The early years provision is good**

- The executive headteacher has taken appropriate action to strengthen teaching in the Reception class. Consequently, teaching is now effective. Children in the Reception class benefit from a broad range of well-planned activities that help all pupils, including the disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and the most able, make good progress.

- Children have plenty of opportunities to experience at first hand the world around them. For instance, when children were taken on an autumn walk, they were encouraged to use their senses to describe and then write about what they saw, heard, felt and smelt. They also had the opportunity to design a tree house for different animals. These activities effectively promoted children’s literacy and creative development.

- Staff work together well to ensure children are well cared for, safe and helped to settle in quickly when they join the school.

- Children’s behaviour is good. They listen carefully, take turns and share resources. In one example, the teacher asked some children to design and make their own individual ‘number lines’. Without adult input, the children shared out the paper and crayons, talked about the importance of writing down the numbers in the correct order, and helped each other as they worked.

- The senior leader from St John and Monica has responsibility for leading developments in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Her leadership is good. She provides all adults in the Reception class with an effective level of support.

- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of strengths in the early years provision and also where further improvements are required. They acknowledge that the outdoor environment is underdeveloped. Work has started to extend the outdoor space and to broaden the range of outdoor equipment.
## What inspection judgements mean

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Judgement</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>Requires improvement</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td>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.</td>
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School details

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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.

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<td>Pat Cox</td>
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<td>Eileen Walker (Executive Headteacher)</td>
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