

St Laurence Church Infant School

Bunbury Road, Northfield, Birmingham, West Midlands B31 2DJ

Inspection dates

20–21 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Although standards have dipped since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have taken effective action to identify and remedy identified weaknesses.
- Subject leaders have formulated action plans which focus on appropriate priorities in each year group. This has ensured that teaching is consistently good and pupils make good progress.
- Leaders regularly monitor the progress and attainment of individual pupils. While attainment information is summarised by class, cohort and pupil group, leaders do not apply the same process to summarise the progress made by different cohorts or pupil groups.
- Governors provide good levels of challenge and support. They question leaders thoroughly in meetings in order to hold them to account.
- The most able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Teachers provide work which is well matched to pupils' level of ability and additional support or challenge are provided where needed.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of learning activities. It is well enriched through trips, visitors and clubs. As a result, pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. Attendance rates are above average.
- All adults provide high levels of nurture and support. Pupils are well looked after and leaders and staff make sure that pupils are safe and know how to stay safe.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful. They behave well and work hard to reach the highest level of their classroom star chart.
- Children make good progress in the early years because teaching is good and provision is well led and managed. As a result, children are well prepared for life in Year 1.
- While disadvantaged pupils make good progress, often from very low starting points, too few reach the levels expected nationally. Leaders are aware of this and have set this as a whole-school priority.
- Teachers' use of questioning is good in the early years but not sufficiently challenging in key stage 1. Sometimes the pace of learning is too slow and pupils lose interest in their work.
- Pupils are adept at number work and problem-solving in mathematics but are less confident in their reasoning skills.
- Pupils do not readily transfer or apply the good literacy skills they acquire in writing lessons to other subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils so that a greater proportion reach and exceed the levels expected in all year groups.
- Raise the quality of teaching, especially in writing and mathematics, by ensuring that teachers:
 - use more challenging questions to probe and deepen pupils' thinking
 - maintain a brisk pace in lessons so that pupils remain on task and fully engaged
 - promote reasoning skills in mathematics so that pupils gain a greater understanding of the concepts taught
 - promote literacy skills in other subjects so that pupils apply and extend their use of grammar, punctuation and spelling across the curriculum.
- Further improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that assessment information is summarised to show progress of key groups, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors were disappointed with the results in 2016 but have taken effective action to address the weaknesses identified. For example, training in phonics has been provided for both teaching and support staff. As a result, teaching has improved and provisional results indicate that standards are rising and in line with the national average.
- In order to hold staff to account and monitor their performance to maintain the good quality of teaching in the school, leaders set teaching and support staff challenging targets. These targets are based on the school's key priorities. Regular checks are carried out throughout the year and reviews held to ensure that these targets are being met.
- The headteacher is ably supported by a dedicated leadership team. The deputy headteacher has managed the school well during the headteacher's absence and coordinates the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. Subject and year group leaders are actively involved in monitoring the quality of teaching in their respective areas. They regularly review pupils' work and have formulated clear action plans to tackle areas of weakness. They carry out their duties diligently and regularly report back to the governing body.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of curricular activities offered. Work in 'red books' and displays around the school show the breadth of subjects taught. Physical education (PE) is a particular strength and pupils benefit from the high-quality lessons and clubs provided. Pupils regularly design, make and paint artefacts, thus developing their creative talents. Religious education features highly because of the denomination of the school. A thematic approach encourages pupils to make links between subjects and to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Occasionally, pupils do not transfer their good-quality writing skills into other subjects.
- The curriculum is enriched through visits, visitors and theme days. These provide memorable experiences for pupils. A wide range of activities available at lunchtimes and at the breakfast and after-school clubs contribute greatly to pupils' positive attitudes towards school.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are treated equally and achieve well. Additional support is provided during lessons and through one-to-one teaching sessions. This enables these pupils to make good progress from their individual starting points, as can be seen in their workbooks. The school also funds a family support worker one day per week, to support the emotional and social well-being of individual pupils. When issues arise, leaders intervene swiftly and tailor support for individual pupils to help them sustain their progress.
- The sports premium has a positive impact on pupils' physical development, health and well-being and their participation in sport. The school employs two qualified sports coaches to teach all classes dance, gymnastics and games and run lunchtime activities. Staff observe these sessions and use the opportunity to assess their pupils' coordination and physical development. This has greatly enhanced teachers' levels of

confidence in teaching PE and ensures that high-quality lessons are sustainable.

- The funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent effectively and is having a positive impact on their progress. It allows the school to provide a high level of personalised support, work closely with external agencies and run intervention sessions. All pupils have a personalised support plan which is tailored to individual needs. The deputy headteacher carefully monitors the impact of the support in place. Training is provided to ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge needed to run intervention sessions and support pupils fully.
- The school has introduced an assessment tracking system which allows leaders to collect and analyse the attainment of pupils across the school. Teachers check their judgements of pupils' work with other local schools to ensure that their assessments are accurate. While leaders analyse this information in terms of progress for individual pupils, they do not summarise it in terms of key groups, for example disadvantaged pupils and the most able. As a result, they do not have a secure understanding of how different groups of pupils are progressing. Their evaluation of achievement and teaching is therefore overgenerous.
- The local authority representative accurately identified that standards were declining and alerted leaders to this during visits made in the autumn and spring terms. Advice and guidance provided in respective reports were helpful, especially in relation to outcomes in phonics and standards for disadvantaged pupils. The representative agrees that the school provides a good, rather than outstanding, level of education.

Governance of the school

- The members of the governing body are committed and dedicated to ensuring that pupils receive a good education. They have a secure understanding of published data and the information provided by the school. They meet regularly to discuss the work of the school and receive comprehensive information from the headteacher and her leadership team. This provides them with a good view of how well the school is achieving. They ask probing questions in meetings and are not afraid to challenge leaders when needed.
- Governors make sure that safeguarding policies and practices are effective and meet legal requirements. They ensure that the process of performance management of staff is effective and its links to pay progression are fair and transparent. Governors ensure that their own training is kept up to date, including that on the safer recruitment of staff.
- Governors monitor all aspects of the management of the school's finances, including the use of additional funding such as the pupil premium. However, the statement on the school's website does not provide a breakdown of how this funding is used or show its impact on the achievement of eligible pupils. The absence of progress information about key groups also means that governors are not fully aware of whether disadvantaged pupils are making the same rates of progress as other pupils in the school. This reduces their ability to challenge leaders further and hold them to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. The designated leader ensures that effective policies and procedures are in place to keep pupils safe. Staff undertake regular training and records are up to date. Teachers and other adults are clear about their responsibility and what they have to do to support pupils who may be at risk. Pupils are taught how to keep safe and they trust adults at the school to look after them. When pupils experience difficult situations, the school works effectively with families and external agencies to ensure that they get the best possible support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers collaborate with year-group colleagues to plan lessons which meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Teachers have good subject knowledge and apply the school's marking and feedback policy consistently. Regular checks are made by teachers and support staff during lessons to ensure that pupils understand the work set and are making progress.
- Following a dip in results in 2016, leaders commissioned training in phonics for teachers from an external consultant. This has improved the quality and input of teaching phonics. Pupils get off to a good start in the early years and quickly learn letters and their sounds. This enables them to break down new and tricky words. Outcomes in phonics are now rising.
- Standards in reading are higher than writing and mathematics. Pupils read daily and teachers give due consideration to the range of books available. Superhero annuals are, for example, available to engage boys. Reading books are pitched at the right level for pupils and are of good quality. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are heard read regularly by volunteers or support staff. This enables them to make good progress.
- Writing is taught well and teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise their handwriting, grammar, spelling and punctuation skills in structured sessions. Most pupils present their work neatly and English books demonstrate good progress over time. However, pupils do not use their good-quality writing skills as well in other subjects. Work is not as well presented and work produced is not of the same quality.
- Mathematics activities are suitably planned for pupils of different ability levels. The most able are challenged well and higher-level work is provided. Good support is provided for lower-ability pupils who need extra help, either through equipment or from teaching assistants. Workbooks show that there is a strong emphasis placed on number work and discussions with pupils demonstrate that their mental arithmetic skills are secure. Problem-solving activities are incorporated regularly to allow pupils to apply the skills they have learned. However, pupils' reasoning skills are underdeveloped. This is because pupils are not required to explain their thinking or demonstrate how they reached their answers. This limits their ability to demonstrate that they are working at greater depth.
- On occasion, the pace of teaching is too slow. Pupils listen to instructions for extensive

periods of time before being moved on to the tasks set. This slows down their rates of progress. Additionally, some teachers in key stage 1 do not question pupils deeply enough to check their understanding or deepen their thinking. Closed questions are used which often only require single-word answers. This limits pupils' use of language and restricts their ability to think and work things out for themselves.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils readily take on additional responsibilities, such as being members of the school council. This gives pupils a voice in the school. They have a growing understanding of British values, especially democracy and their right to vote for what they believe in. This helps prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders strongly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school values underpin the ethos within the school. These are reinforced in lessons, assemblies and through prominent displays. Key messages, such as 'be kind, share and listen', help pupils gain a good level of understanding, appreciation and respect for each other and for those from other countries and with different beliefs. Pupils are actively encouraged to socialise at playtimes, work together in lessons and develop their appreciation of the arts and music.
- Adults provide high levels of nurture and support for all pupils. Leaders and staff ensure that pupils are well supported when they have emotional difficulties. This is especially helpful for those who are the most vulnerable.
- Pupils are safe and feel safe at school. They know that they can talk to an adult if they are concerned about anything. They are taught about risks and how to avoid them. Visits from emergency services, together with personal, social, and health education lessons, inform pupils about personal safety issues. Pupils have a good understanding about road, water and internet safety.
- Pupils have an early awareness of different forms of bullying, including physical and cyber bullying. They are confident that, if they report any unkind behaviour, teachers deal with it swiftly. The school records show that any potential bullying is dealt with effectively.
- The large majority of parents who talked to inspectors confirmed that their children are safe and happy at school. Parents say that staff are 'approachable and sort out any problems'.
- Before- and after-school care provides a useful resource for parents and their children. Those who attend enjoy a healthy breakfast or snack, and engage happily in the activities offered. Pupils are well supervised and play together willingly. The morning session gives them a good start to the day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in and around school. They are polite and well mannered and show good levels of respect for adults and each other. Pupils say that behaviour is good and their parents agree.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the school's behaviour policy. Most work hard to reach the highest level (gold) on the star chart in all classrooms. They are positive about the school's system of rewards and sanctions and enjoy having parents attend the Monday assemblies to see certificates awarded, when, as pupils put it, their behaviour is 'absolutely fabulous'. They are clear about what is expected from them and respond accordingly.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is shown through their above-average attendance. Leaders carefully track and check any absences of pupils. Effective action is taken where a pupil's attendance becomes an issue. The family support worker provides a valuable communication link between home and school.
- On occasion, when the pace of teaching slows, some pupils lose interest in their work and disengage. Both the quality and quantity of pupils' work then suffer.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection, standards have dipped. Leaders and governors were particularly disappointed with the results in 2016, when standards were broadly average, rather than above the national average, as usually seen. Leaders analysed those results and put in place additional training and monitoring. This has led to improved teaching and, as a result, standards have recovered in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Provisional key stage 1 results for 2017 indicate that standards are set to be above the national average in reading at both the expected and higher level. Attainment in writing and mathematics is likely to be above average at the expected level but in line with the national average at greater depth. Writing and mathematics standards are therefore not as strong as those in reading.
- The gradual decline in the Year 1 phonics test results has now been curbed. Current pupils are making good progress. Provisional results for 2017 show that the proportion of pupils reaching the required level is in line with the national average, having been below average last year, reflecting the impact of much-improved teaching.
- There is clear evidence in pupils' books that progress is good across the school for all groups, including disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able. Well-planned lessons with appropriate levels of support or challenge enable pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress, not only in English and mathematics, but across the curriculum. Science, history, geography and creative skills are all integrated into the thematic approach adopted by leaders. Many lessons are practical but teachers capture evidence through photographs of pupils' work, for example learning a Thai dance

during creative arts week. These photographs contribute to displays around the school and classrooms and celebrate pupils' good achievement.

- School information and work in books show that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points. Effective support from teachers and support staff, as well as intervention strategies, are having a positive impact on outcomes.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making good progress. Work in books and individual assessment records show that they sustain their progress across each key stage. However, the progress of some of the most able disadvantaged pupils is not sufficiently accelerated, and these pupils are capable of reaching even higher levels.
- Although disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points, they do not attain as well as other pupils nationally or their peers. While they benefit academically from the attention and support they receive, leaders do not track or evaluate the progress of groups carefully enough, including disadvantaged pupils, to determine which actions are leading to the greatest success and where further development is needed.

Early years provision

Good

- Most children join the school with skills and knowledge which are at least typical for their age. Areas of strength include children's physical, mathematical and personal, social and emotional development. Writing and communication skills are less secure on entry. Children make good progress in all areas of learning because teaching is good and the provision is well led and managed. By the end of the Reception Year, the large majority of children reach a good level of development. As a result, they are well prepared for life in Year 1.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan exciting activities which build on children's current levels of ability. Greater levels of challenge are provided for the most able, together with additional support and resources for lower-ability children. Disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and provided with personal support plans in line with the school's policy. This targets individual areas for improvement.
- Adults regularly ask open-ended questions which enable children to demonstrate their understanding. Further probing questions encourage children to explain their thinking and give reasons for choices made.
- Children's work is celebrated through displays of work in all classrooms. Both the indoor and outdoor learning environments are resourced and used well. Leaders have developed the outdoor area since the previous inspection but are keen to develop the 'spinney' so that children gain a greater experience of learning in a natural environment.
- As a result of interesting and varied activities, children are fully engaged in their learning. They share equipment well and show resilience in solving problems and completing tasks. Lots of opportunities are provided for children to use their imaginations and make links between different areas of the curriculum.

- All adults provide good levels of nurture and support so that children feel safe and confident. Routines are well established and children know what is expected of them. The majority of children behave well, listen carefully and follow instructions. Adults model being respectful and polite and expect children to do the same. As a result, relationships are positive and, during activities, children work well with each other.
- Provision is well led and managed by the early years leader. There is a clear vision of where further improvements can be made. These are set out in the leader's comprehensive action plan. Adults carry out regular observations and assessments of children. They annotate photographic evidence or children's work and add these to learning journals to demonstrate progress against all areas of learning. These provide a helpful source of information for leaders and parents. Detailed observations of children's writing are used to skilfully plan the next steps for individuals.
- Induction for children joining the school is imaginative and well planned. Children are invited to join 'Paddington Bear's birthday party' as part of their pre-school package with their parents. A coloured balloon and party pack ensure that children want to return to school. Teachers also carry out home visits prior to children joining school to gather further information from parents and build positive relationships.
- Safeguarding is effective. Teachers and other adults are attentive to the needs of children and make sure that they are appropriately supervised at all times. Adults ensured that children wore hats and sunscreen during the heatwave, which coincided with the inspection, to prevent any children suffering from heatstroke or sunburn.

School details

Unique reference number	103459
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10032627

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Brown
Headteacher	Caroline Proctor
Telephone number	0121 464 2888
Website	www.stlrci.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@stlrci.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 December 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information about the evaluation and impact of the use of the pupil premium and sports funding.
- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The early years comprises three Reception classes for children who attend full-time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.

- Before- and after-school care is provided and managed by the school.

Information about this inspection

- The headteacher was on long-term sickness absence during the inspection owing to illness. The deputy headteacher has been the acting headteacher since Easter.
- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classes. A number of lessons were observed jointly with the acting headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They talked to groups of pupils to gain their views of the school. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and at the start and end of the school day, as well as in lessons.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including assessments and records of pupils' attainment, the school's checks and records related to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, records of governors' activities, records of how teaching is managed and the school's own self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors held meetings with the assistant headteacher and all other members of the leadership team. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and another governor. The lead inspector also met with a representative of Birmingham Education Partnership on behalf of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to parents at the start and end of the school day and considered the views of parents who contacted the lead inspector through Ofsted by telephone.

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joanne Evans	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Lowry	Ofsted Inspector
Gareth Morgan	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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