

St Laurence's Catholic Primary School

Leaside Avenue, Southdene, Kirkby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L32 9QX

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement. Standards are declining below those seen at the time of the previous inspection. Too few pupils consistently reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics or make the progress expected of them. Progress is uneven across the school.
- The gaps in progress and attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are too wide and are not closing quickly enough.
- At times, work set does not provide enough challenge, particularly for the most able, and too little is expected from pupils in lessons. Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to write at length or use mathematical skills to reason and solve problems.
- Sometimes, teachers do not provide enough time for pupils to act on the guidance given in marking.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching do not always take pupils' progress into account.
- Although the school rightly recognises that achievement requires improvement, leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching over time are too generous. Actions taken are leading to improvements, but the school recognises that there is more to do.
- Over time, governors have accepted an overly positive view of the school's performance. They have not held the school fully to account for the progress of all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able.
- The skills of middle and subject leaders to check on pupils' learning are not yet fully developed.
- Priorities in the school's plans are not fully focused on the areas needing improvement. Targets and timescales are not sharp enough to allow all leaders to check that the actions taken are swiftly bringing about the improvements required.

The school has the following strengths

- Early years provision is good. It is well led and good teaching ensures that children enjoy learning and achieve well.
- Progress has started to accelerate. More pupils in the current classes are beginning to reach the higher standards.
- Sports funding is used very effectively and pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities.
- The concerted efforts of staff, pupils and parents have improved attendance, and it is now in line with most other schools nationally.
- Pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable are cared for well.
- A strong community ethos permeates all the school does. Pupils are happy, behave well and feel safe and valued. Parents are highly supportive of the leaders and staff.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Pupils play an active role in the school and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching over time, including observing teaching and learning in lessons.
- The inspectors also looked at examples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read. They observed the teaching of reading skills and talked to pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- Inspectors talked with pupils as they played at break times, and visited the dining hall at lunchtime. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around school and spoke with pupils attending the breakfast club.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to them about their work.
- Inspectors met with three governors. They spoke to a representative of the local authority and met with members of school staff.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and met with a group of parents attending a parental workshop. They took account of a letter from a parent, of the 83 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and of the school's questionnaire issued to parents. They also took account of returns to the staff questionnaire completed during the inspection.
- A range of documents was examined, including information about pupils' progress and school improvement.
- Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender , Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Andy Purcell

Additional Inspector

Faheem Chishti

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is oversubscribed and is larger than the average-sized primary school. Most year groups have a higher proportion of boys than girls. Some pupils are taught in mixed-aged classes. Children in the Nursery class attend either the morning or afternoon sessions.
- Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above that found in most other schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is high. (This additional funding is provided 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 school has experienced significant staffing changes since the previous inspection. This includes changes to the leadership team.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The governing body provides breakfast- and after-school clubs for pupils who attend the school.
- The school has dedicated 'Space for Sports and Arts' provision which is open to the community. It has other community provision where regular family workshops and training programmes are held.
- The school holds a number of awards, including Investors in People, the Basic Skills award and the 2014 Liverpool Echo Primary School of the Year award. Most recently, the school received a highly commended accolade from the Speaker of the House of Commons as part of his School Council Award.
- The school is an Early Years Centre of Excellence. The school provides support for other schools in the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good in order to accelerate progress and raise standards for all pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged by ensuring that:
 - pupils are offered sufficiently challenging activities which enable them to make faster progress and achieve as well as they can in lessons
 - teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - pupils have time to act on advice given in marking
 - pupils have plenty of opportunities to produce good quality extended writing in literacy lessons and when they write in other subjects
 - regular opportunities are provided for pupils to use reasoning and solve problems using their knowledge of the basic skills of mathematics.
- Improve the leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - governors are provided with enough information to enable them to check how well all pupils and groups of pupils are doing, compared to other pupils nationally
 - the school development plan is firmly linked to the correct priorities and has sharp targets and milestones to enable leaders to check that their actions are having sufficient impact
 - checks on the quality of teaching take into account the progress made by all groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and most able
 - the skills of middle and subject leaders continue to develop so that they are fully involved in leading improvements in teaching.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. In addition, an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Improvement is required because leaders have not ensured that pupils make consistently good progress. There is too much variation in the achievement of different groups of pupils, particularly the most able and those who are disadvantaged, and gaps in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils are not narrowing quickly enough.
- Improved checks on how well pupils are doing are helping leaders to identify more rapidly the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and those at risk of falling behind. Carefully targeted teaching linked to pupils' individual needs is helping bring pupils back on track and, as a result, progress in the current year groups is becoming more rapid. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils and the most able is not yet fully secure and so the promotion of equal opportunities, although improving, is not yet fully effective.
- Senior leaders have correctly identified that achievement requires improvement. However, the school's development plan does not take sufficient account of pupils who are not making the progress they should. Targets and timescales are not sharp enough to enable all leaders, including governors, to check that the actions being taken are the right ones and are having a quick enough impact.
- The quality of teaching is checked regularly. However, lesson observations and checks on work in pupils' books do not take enough account of the progress made by pupils. As a result, leaders do not always know enough about the impact of the actions taken and governors have been given an overly positive view of the quality of teaching over time.
- The headteacher has established a committed staff team and all staff and leaders are determined to keep moving the school forward. Teachers' performance is linked to the progress of pupils and training needs are identified and provided quickly. Some subject and middle leaders are at an early stage of developing their management role in ensuring that teaching and learning are consistently good or better.
- All staff provide very effective support for those pupils whose circumstances might prevent them coming to school ready to learn. Pupils and their families particularly appreciate the helpful support of the learning mentor.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Leaders make sure that pupils develop their understanding of different cultures, religions and lifestyles effectively. The school is very proud of their recent award from the Speaker of the House of Commons for the work of their school council. Staff promote core values such as honesty, respect and tolerance extremely well and this demonstrates the school's drive to foster good relations, tackle discrimination and prepare all pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum offers pupils a range of topics which capture their interests well. Staff ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in a wealth of enrichment activities. Pupils of different ages who attend the breakfast- and after-school clubs get on well together and enjoy the range of activities provided for them.
- The school is particularly proud of the range of sporting awards gained by pupils. The additional sport funding is used particularly effectively to give pupils experience of a wide range of different sports and access to external sports coaches. As a result, pupils' skills are developed well and they view physical education and the need to stay active and healthy very positively.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors, contributed to parent view or responded to the parental questionnaire issued by the school, hold exceptionally positive views of the care provided for their children by the headteacher and staff. They feel fully involved in this harmonious school community and say that the staff provide valuable information about how they can help their children learn. Regular courses and workshops are held for parents to enable them to develop parenting and basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Attendance is in line with the national average. It has a high profile and continues to improve.
- The school is an active member of the Kirkby Collaboration of Schools.
- Support from the local authority has not yet been sufficient to prevent the decline in achievement experienced by the school since the previous inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly supportive of the school and committed to bringing about improvements. They receive regular reports from the headteacher and other leaders about the quality of teaching and some make regular visits to gain first-hand views of school life. They recognise that achievement requires improvement. However, governors have not always held the school securely to account for the progress of all groups of pupils.
 - Minutes from governing body meetings show that governors ask challenging questions of the

leadership. However, they do not always receive enough information about the progress of the different groups and, at times, governors have too readily accepted the positive views of senior leaders and have not sufficiently challenged the school where data shows progress is slow or gaps are widening and how these reflect the quality of teaching.

- Governors oversee performance management arrangements and they ensure that procedures are in place to link the performance of pupils to any decisions made about teachers' pay awards. As a result, teachers only receive financial reward if their pupils reach their progress and attainment targets.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are immensely proud of their school. They are keen to tell visitors about their work, the range of enrichment activities provided for them and the way that the adults in the school keep them safe and take care of them.
- Pupils of all ages show great respect for one another and towards adults. They behave well in lessons and move around school extremely sensibly and smartly. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and teaching assistants and enjoy the regular opportunities provided for them to work collaboratively. Occasionally learning slows because work is too easy and pupils' concentration drifts. At times, they are too content with producing less than their best work, particularly when completing some worksheet-based tasks.
- Pupils make an excellent contribution to the life of the school and eagerly and diligently take on a range of roles. For example, some pupils represent their class on the school council and others have been appointed house captains. Some of the older pupils also enjoy helping the younger pupils and, at times, teach their teachers too! For example, the 'digital leaders' are currently helping their teachers and other pupils get the best out of using electronic tablets.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils are well informed about the dangers they might face, and how to keep themselves safe in different situations. For example, they are taught how to use the internet and mobile technology safely and the school runs workshops for parents on this aspect too.
- Pupils understand the different kinds of bullying including verbal, racist or cyber bullying. They and their parents say that bullying of any kind is rare and that if it ever happened, adults would deal with it quickly.
- Due to the concerted efforts of pupils, staff and parents, attendance continues to improve and is now securely in line with the national average. The school website celebrates the class with the best attendance each week.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has not been good enough over time to enable all pupils, particularly the most able and those who are disadvantaged, to make consistently good progress. However, leaders have taken decisive action and some aspects of teaching have improved recently.
- The teaching of basic number skills and tables facts and the development of pupils' grasp of grammar, spelling and punctuation are increasingly effective and pupils are becoming more confident in applying this knowledge to their learning. However, this work is not always built on well as well as it could be. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to produce good quality extended writing in literacy lessons and in other subjects or use their knowledge of mathematics to reason and solve problems. This means that sometimes learning, particularly for the most able, is not challenging enough and progress is not as rapid as it could be in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In some classes, the most able pupils get work which is more challenging than for other pupils, but even this is not always demanding enough to stretch pupils' thinking or extend their skills. There are times when they are expected do lots of examples of work they are already confident with or to sit through explanations where they already understand what they need to do.
- Teachers plan activities which capture the imagination of pupils. They use questioning effectively to identify any misconceptions and provide pupils with clear explanations of what they are expected to learn. However, sometimes expectations of how much work pupils can complete are not high enough and activities presented on worksheets can, on occasions, limit the amount of work possible, particularly in writing tasks. Leaders have recognised that pupils need to produce more work in lessons and have

provided guidance for teachers to bring this about. There has not been enough time to see the full impact on pupils' progress.

- The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is increasingly tailored to their particular needs. However, the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics for these pupils also requires improvement as it does not always ensure that their progress accelerates sufficiently to overcome the issues they face and close the gaps with their classmates.
- Teachers mark work regularly and increasingly they provide the next steps pupils need to be able to improve their work. However, pupils are not always given enough time in lessons to act on the advice given or make the corrections needed.
- The school library is a popular resource. The enjoyment of reading is promoted well and pupils read widely and often and enjoy the books linked to their topics.
- Across the school, warm, positive relationships exist between pupils and adults. Effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants contributes well to pupils' learning.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- By the end Key Stage 2 most pupils reach the standards expected of them for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. However, achievement requires improvement because too few pupils gain the higher levels in these subjects. The proportion of pupils consistently making the progress expected of them or doing better than this by the end of Year 6 is not high enough and progress rates across the school vary considerably.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 was similar to the national average. However, standards overall remained at the below average levels seen in recent years, because too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment, particularly in mathematics. Pupils in Year 1 achieve at least average results in the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) check.
- The most able pupils do not always make the progress expected of them or reach the higher levels of which they are capable. This is because the work they are given is not always demanding enough.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to that of their classmates and requires improvement.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 2 improved, but was still over two terms behind that of other pupils in the school and of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in the school and their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics narrowed to around a term, but gaps with non-disadvantaged pupils elsewhere widened to around three terms in all three subjects. Throughout the school, the gaps between disadvantaged and other pupils vary considerably and are not closing rapidly enough.
- Leaders' focus on developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills is proving effective. Pupils' books and observations in lessons show that a good grasp of basic number and tables facts has been achieved. In addition, the basic skills of grammar, spelling and punctuation are developed well so that by the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils gaining the expected and higher levels in the national test of this aspect are consistently in line with the national average. Disadvantaged pupils do well and reach similar standards to non-disadvantaged pupils in the school and elsewhere. However, there are not always enough opportunities for pupils, particularly the most able, to use these basic skills to produce good quality extended writing or reason and solve problems in mathematics. As a result, progress in reading, writing and mathematics is not as rapid as it should be.

The early years provision

is good

- Children get off to a good start in the early years classes. They settle well and quickly become happy and curious learners because of the good provision.
- Leadership of the early years is good. Staff work as an effective and well-trained team. Children feel safe because adults help them think about safety carefully. Parents say that teachers and teaching assistants are very supportive, care for their children well and give them plenty of information about how well their children are doing.
- Most children enter the Nursery class with skills below those typical for their age. Communication and language skills, number skills and aspects of personal, social and emotional development are particularly weak. Children make at least typical and often good progress in all areas of their learning, because

teaching is consistently good and the adults provide a range of interesting and stimulating activities. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception continues to improve and is now close to the national average. Literacy and mathematics skills are improving and children are increasingly well prepared for their move to Year 1.

- Adults ask good questions of the children to check on what they know and then help them to learn and develop further. Children who are disabled and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as the other children, given their starting points and abilities. Gaps in skills and knowledge between children who are disadvantaged and other children, although still varying from year to year, are beginning to close.
- Children play happily together. They are encouraged to share their ideas and develop their language, thinking and understanding. For example, some children were playing in the well-equipped outdoor area during the inspection. One group eagerly counted the correct number of bean bags before tossing them accurately on to the number mats provided. Another group were patiently creating an interesting structure built from the cardboard tubes and boxes provided. This took great dexterity, lots of thought and team work. Throughout, the adults watched carefully and intervened only when necessary to move learning on, skilfully allowing children to make decisions and focus on what they were doing.
- Adults carefully observe and record how well each child is learning in 'learning journals.' Together with information gathered from parents, these give an attractive and helpful picture of children's' development.

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	104461
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	453209

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	401
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Nick Wilde
Headteacher	Mr Paul Cronin
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2008
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