

St Leonard's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Tunstall Village Road, Silksworth, Sunderland, SR3 2BB

Inspection dates 21–22 October 2015

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The determined and enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the skilful deputy headteacher, has ensured that an uncompromising drive to improve pervades every area of school life.
- Recent and continuing actions have ensured that the quality of teaching and assessment has improved, accelerating the progress pupils make in their learning. The school has significantly improved since the last inspection.
- Governors consistently challenge the school and hold senior leaders to account. They know the school very well.
- Outcomes for pupils are now good. Pupils clearly enjoy their work, tackling learning with enthusiasm and a sense of fun.
- Current pupils' progress is consistently good and improving across all year groups in school.
- Children in the early years quickly develop skills that allow them to learn and play happily together. Their levels of concentration are excellent and allow them to stick to a task and not give up. They make a fast start in their reading, writing and understanding of number.
- Teaching is good. Pupils learn quickly and show enjoyment in well-planned lessons that allow them to apply their skills across all subjects.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are exceptionally polite, have good manners and display positive attitudes when working in class.
- Pupils' consideration of others and pride in their work and their school ensures that their personal development and welfare are very good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' levels of achievement are not consistently high enough, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Occasionally, not enough is demanded of some pupils, especially the most-able pupils. As a result, the pace of learning slows and some pupils lose concentration.
- Sometimes, pupils do not always put into practice the feedback given by teachers on how to improve their work.
- A significant minority of pupils arrive at school late.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate the rates of progress pupils make in their learning so that they reach even higher standards of attainment, especially in Key Stage 1, by:
 - making sure all pupils are consistently stretched and challenged in their learning, especially the most-able pupils
 - ensuring that the pace of learning allows pupils to be consistently engaged in lessons and maintain concentration
 - giving pupils more opportunities over time to put into practice the feedback given by teachers on improving their work
 - ensuring that pupils arrive at school on time so that lessons begin promptly and not a moment is lost to learn.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The very talented headteacher has worked tirelessly to eliminate underperformance and secure a settled teaching team. As a result, progress has accelerated and standards have been raised, and the school has greatly improved since the last inspection. Teaching has improved, good behaviour flourishes and the rates of progress that current pupils make in their learning are accelerating. This is not yet reflected in statutory assessment data at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of what the school does well as a result of ongoing, extensive and highly detailed monitoring of the school's performance. They have clear-cut priorities for those areas that require further improvement and are relentless in their pursuit of excellence, communicating a sense of drive and urgency to continue to move forward quickly.
- Procedures to check the quality of teaching and learning across the school are highly effective. Leaders and managers are skilful in ensuring that their analysis and interpretation of information about pupils' progress leads to actions that address any areas of concern. These actions include effective use of the pupil premium, ensuring that good support is given to the very small number of disadvantaged pupils.
- Staff performance is managed effectively. Staff have challenging objectives for their own professional development, linked closely to school priorities. The school has invested extensively in training for staff, which supports their professional development extremely well.
- Pupils benefit from a lively, broad and well-planned curriculum, based on a series of learning challenges. Themes and topics are brought to life by an exciting range of visits and visitors to school. For example, during the inspection Year 2 visited Sunderland Glass Centre as part of Science Week. Subjects are linked together very well, pupils having many opportunities to develop their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers work closely together to regularly review the curriculum and check that it meets the needs of the pupils in the school. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a number of extra-curricular clubs over the year which enhances their learning, such as choir, gymnastics and other sports.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is extremely strong. It reinforces traditional British values, and also has an international dimension with charitable links to a school in Swaziland, Africa. St Leonard's is a caring, outward-looking school, typified by Year 6 pupils introducing their Reception children 'buddies' during a Liturgy assembly attended by many parents.
- The views of all pupils are valued and many have an opportunity to play a part in the life of the school such as in the school council and the 'Mini Vinnies' group, as well as a range of different jobs in each class. The school's highly inclusive approach fosters excellent relationships, and there are high levels of trust and respect between all individuals.
- Links with parents are very positive, and their views are regularly sought and valued. Parents appreciate that the school gives all children an equal opportunity to succeed and does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. Every parent who completed the online questionnaire Parent View agreed that their child was happy at school.
- PE and sport premium is used very well to raise staff expertise in the teaching of PE. Specialist coaches work alongside school staff, and the school has provided many additional opportunities to develop sporting skills.
- The school has benefited from good support from the local authority, and from the expertise of staff from the St Bede's Deanery Teaching Schools' Alliance.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is extremely effective. It is very well informed, incisive in its approach to school improvement, and analyses closely all performance information. Leaders and teachers are held to account for the quality of teaching and learning in the school, and their impact on pupil progress. Performance management procedures are robust and rigorous. Stringent monitoring of finances, including the pupil premium, has ensured the school is on a sound financial footing.
 - Governors make a meaningful contribution to the way in which leaders check the effectiveness of the school's performance, such as holding structured conversations with pupils, and are individually linked to a year group and a subject. They are adept at helping to set priorities for development.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school knows its pupils very well, and detailed

records are kept of all safeguarding issues. Parents report that their children are safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is now consistently good and has improved since the last inspection. The impact of this good teaching on learning has resulted in pupils making good progress and reaching higher levels of achievement.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and usually ensure that the pace of learning and level of challenge enables pupils to concentrate and be fully involved in their learning. Opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their skills in a variety of ways and in a number of different subjects.
- Occasionally the progress of some pupils is not fast enough or is too variable as a result of insufficient challenge, especially for the most-able pupils. As a result, the pace of learning slows and pupils lose concentration. This variance over time has resulted in pupils' rates of progress not accelerating quickly enough and consistently high standards not being reached, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Teachers usually question pupils skilfully, and regularly check their knowledge and understanding. When teachers assess pupils' understanding and change or modify the next steps in pupils' learning, teachers secure maximum progress for pupils.
- In mathematics, basic skills are taught very well and consolidated regularly. In Year 6, pupils confidently justified their solutions to the addition and subtraction of negative numbers. In Year 5, pupils were able to solve one- and two-step word problems involving addition and subtraction related to their study of outer space.
- Pupils write enthusiastically and with imagination, often because the purpose for writing is linked to the topic they are studying, firing their interest. Pupils in Year 3 were preparing an opening paragraph to a story 'Escape from Pompeii', and children in Reception were drawing and writing about the dragon's missing egg which had disappeared from their outside area. Year 1 pupils started to write a fact file about a chosen animal as part of Science Week.
- The younger children make an excellent start in their early reading because of a systematic and rigorous approach to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in order to make sense of words. Many read at home, often with a member of their family. Pupils continue to enjoy and make progress in their reading, which is fluent and expressive, as they move through school.
- Marking of work is thorough and regular, and consistently of a high standard across school. Pupils show that they clearly understand the school's strategy, which shows them what is good and what needs to be improved. Pupils are given time to read and respond to feedback given by staff. This moves their learning and understanding forward, but occasionally teachers do not ensure that pupils continue to put into practice the feedback over time.
- Teaching assistants and teachers work together very well to give timely and constructive advice to pupils, including those with special educational needs or who are disabled. The quality of support is high, whether adults are working with a group or an individual pupil, resulting in good academic progress, as well as strong social and emotional development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident, sociable and caring for each other in school, but also for those less fortunate than themselves, both in the local community and further afield and abroad.
- Pupils report feeling safe at school at all times. They are aware of the different types of bullying that they may encounter, including cyber bullying. They know how to stay safe in a variety of situations, including when online. They are confident that, should any minor instances of misbehaviour occur, staff will resolve them quickly and effectively.
- In their responses to the online inspection questionnaire, nearly all parents indicated that their children felt safe in school.
- Although most pupils arrive at school on time ready to learn, a significant minority are late. This disrupts the start of the day, and valuable time to learn is lost.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff set high standards to which pupils respond well. They show high levels of respect and friendliness to adults, visitors and classmates. Older pupils show genuine care and concern for younger pupils, and this creates a real 'family feel' to the school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They strive to succeed, are engaged and motivated to learn and value the contribution of their classmates.
- Occasionally a few pupils can become disengaged from learning, lose concentration or are too slow to respond to instructions from the teacher.
- Pupils' behaviour in the playground, in the dining hall, in breakfast club and as they move around school is excellent. They are polite and courteous, and have excellent manners at all times.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Progress and attainment have improved since the last inspection, especially in Key Stage 2. Assessment information, the school's own tracking information and work in books clearly indicates that current pupils in every year group are now making consistently good progress. This is the case in both English and mathematics, as well as other subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils now start Key Stage 1 with skills that are slightly above average, but this was not the case in the past. Achievement has improved since the last inspection and evidence from the inspection shows that current pupils in Key Stage 1 are making progress which is at least good. Pupils in Year 1 achieve very highly in the national phonics check.
- Pupils who were in Year 2 last year, despite their lower than average standards in statutory assessments, are making rapid progress this year and are catching up quickly.
- Progress has accelerated significantly in Key Stage 2. Pupils are now making good and often outstanding progress in their learning from their individual starting points. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school by the end of Year 6, both in terms of their achievement and in their knowledge of how to be a successful learner.
- The most-able pupils make similarly good progress to their classmates, although sometimes opportunities are missed to add further to the level of challenge and to stretch pupils' thinking. This would allow the most-able pupils to move on at an even faster rate.
- The school is quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Staff then make effective provision for them, including extra support the same day for any pupils who are not secure in a particular aspect of that day's learning. This also includes those pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs. These pupils make good progress because teachers give them activities well matched to their individual ability and needs.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils in each year is too small to make any reliable statistical comparisons between their progress and achievement and that of their classmates. As a result of effective use of the pupil premium funding, this small number of pupils make good progress and achieve well, sometimes outperforming their classmates and all pupils nationally.

Early years provision

is good

- Children make a strong start to their education at St Leonard's. Most start the Reception class with knowledge and skills broadly typical for their age, but some children are below this level. As a result of good teaching, excellent provision and a vibrant and safe learning environment, children make good and sometimes outstanding progress. The proportion of pupils who leave the Reception class with a good level of development is now above average. Children are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Children quickly learn essential social and emotional skills. They are able to share, take turns, and concentrate and apply themselves to tasks for an unexpectedly long period of time. This underpins their strong progress in all areas of learning.
- There are highly positive relationships between staff, children and parents. This helps children to quickly become confident learners and have a positive attitude to school. During the inspection, children worked happily and cooperatively together.

- Staff encourage children to experiment and become independent through well-established and consistent routines. Activities are organised so that there is an effective balance of activities led by adults and those chosen by the children to explore and practise the skills as they play.
- Interactions between adults and children are excellent and help to develop children's speaking and listening skills. A range of thoughtful questioning designed to extend children's vocabulary and responses was observed as adults worked and played alongside children to extend their learning. One child responded to the disappearance of a dragon's egg as 'extremely mysterious!'
- Basic skills in reading, writing and number are promoted very effectively. Opportunities for children to write, mark-make and count are plentiful around the Reception class area. One group took every opportunity to count various objects while outside hunting for the dragon's egg.
- All groups of children make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in the early years, including the most able, disabled children and those with special educational needs. The work and activities provided for children are exciting and interesting, sparking imagination and engagement.
- All children are kept safe and secure in the early years setting, and their behaviour is excellent.
- Links between home and school are strong.
- The leadership and management of the early years are strong. Staff are constantly refining their practice in order to maintain high standards of provision. They accurately measure the progress children make, and have well-thought-through plans to make further improvements. Staff are committed to secure the very best outcomes for all children.

School details

Unique reference number	108846
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10002034

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	196
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Mrs L Gibbons
Headteacher	Mrs B Doherty
Telephone number	0191 553 6288
Website	www.stleonardsprimary.org.uk
Email address	office@stleonards.school
Date of previous inspection	23 October 2013

Information about this school

- St Leonard’s RC VA Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language are well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium funding is below average. (This is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.)
- Early years provision is full-time in the Reception class.
- The school provides a breakfast club each day for its pupils.
- The school meets the government’s floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school is part of the St Bede’s Deanery Teaching Schools’ Alliance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons, including one jointly observed with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors listened to some pupils read and reviewed a sample of their work alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to lessons to check the quality of provision.
- Inspectors held meetings with different groups of people involved with the school. These groups included pupils, a number of governors, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other members of teaching staff, a representative of the local authority and a small number of parents.
- Inspectors viewed a range of documents, including information on pupils' achievements, the school's data on current and recent progress and attainment and the school's view on how well it is doing. They also viewed the school's improvement plan, documents relating to safeguarding and records of behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 51 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 16 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff. The school's website was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

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