

St Lawrence's RC Primary School

Headlam Street, Byker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE6 2JX

Inspection dates	1–2 December 2015
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not acted swiftly enough to ensure that pupils catch up quickly in the early years and at Key Stage 1.
- Leadership of the early years is not focused on the right priorities to improve progress and outcomes for all pupils.
- Leaders across the school do not have clear roles and responsibilities linked to school improvement. This means they are not being held to account rigorously.
- The quality of teaching in the early years provision is variable and learning opportunities are not always maximised for children both indoors and outdoors.
- Teaching requires improvement and has not been consistently good over time to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are not making enough progress from Year 1 to Year 4.
- More able pupils are not being challenged consistently throughout the school, and pupils who require additional help are not being supported in their learning to ensure they make faster progress.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing skills and this is hindering their progress.
- Small-group work and intervention activities are not checked for impact. Therefore, teachers do not know whether pupils are making enough progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's focus and determination has ensured that the quality of teaching and standards in reading have improved in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given a high priority. Opportunities for pupils to develop their responsibilities and service to the community are wide. This is preparing them well to be good citizens.
- Pupils feel safe at school and have a vast array of opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves safe. They behave well and feel well cared for.
- Relationships between governors, school staff, parents and pupils are very strong. Parents are well informed and appreciate the recent improvements at the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching for pupils across the school so that all pupils make at least good progress by:
 - making sure teachers consistently challenge more-able pupils and provide learning opportunities that support those pupils who need additional help, including those with special educational needs
 - ensuring that teachers have high expectations of all pupils and use effective strategies which encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills
 - establishing a system to ensure that teachers are coordinating and monitoring the learning taking place when pupils are in smaller groups.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring checks on teaching, along with the monitoring and evaluation of actions to improve, are firmly focused on pupils' learning and progress across the whole school
 - making sure leaders at all levels know what their roles and responsibilities are and are held accountable in a rigorous and robust manner for pupil progress and outcomes.

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of early years provision by:
 - making sure leaders have a clear action plan for improvement which identifies what needs to improve, how it is going to be done and how the impact may be measured against children's outcomes
 - ensuring assessments are used to plan activities for children which will accelerate their progress
 - providing more activities for children to practise their reading, writing and number skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because over time, work to strengthen the quality of provision and pupils' achievement has lacked the focus and precision necessary across the whole school to drive change at a brisk enough pace. Consequently, pupils do not make the progress that they should across the early years and Key Stage 1.
- The newly appointed headteacher has identified the right priorities and taken appropriate actions within Key Stage 2. While some improvements have had a positive impact, for example, on attainment and progress in reading, particularly in upper Key Stage 2, progress has not been rapid enough in tackling weaker aspects of provision. Leaders have not moved promptly enough to ensure that teaching is consistently good across the school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's self-evaluation is overgenerous. Although the headteacher has taken action to improve the quality of teaching through performance management, leaders do not routinely, rigorously or systematically check that the steps they have taken to improve the school have made the rapid difference needed to enhance pupils' outcomes.
- The headteacher and other leaders carry out checks on the quality of teaching. However, the focus of visits to classrooms is not centred sufficiently on the strategies teachers use to improve learning and the progress that all groups of pupils are making.
- The school development plan identifies key actions to address the school's priorities. However, there is not sufficient clarity regarding leadership responsibilities, including the role of governors. Furthermore, how leaders will check the impact of these actions, specifically related to pupils' outcomes, is not precise enough to ensure rapid progress will be made.
- Senior and middle leaders are not held accountable for their role in the school's improvement. They do not have clear roles and responsibilities and therefore do not help the headteacher in his quest for rapid improvement. This has resulted in the headteacher having to do too much himself.
- Over time, the local authority has not effectively challenged school leaders about improving progress and outcomes for pupils in early years and Key Stage 1. However, this has now changed, and the current local authority achievement partner is working productively with the headteacher to challenge and support him in order to secure improvements in these areas.
- Leaders check the impact of pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils and, overall, the gaps in attainment between them and other pupils as well as pupils nationally are closing. This is because of additional help through smaller class sizes, small-group support and individual packages.
- The school offers pupils a wide range of experiences around which to base their learning. For example, the residential trip to Dukeshouse Wood in Hexham is highly popular, as is the experience at the Youth Village in Northumberland with the Youth Ministry Team. These trips and other experiences, including visitors coming into school and after-school activities, ensure that pupils gain valuable experiences that support their development.
- Pupils show good levels of respect and tolerance for each other. British values are strongly reinforced. The curriculum gives pupils opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain and in the wider world. The chance to apply for responsible roles, such as the school council, and to vote about issues helps them to understand democracy. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because leaders give this a high priority. The school successfully fosters good relations within the community. Equal opportunities are well promoted and discrimination of any form is not tolerated.
- The headteacher and the governing body have recently made changes which ensure that the primary physical education and sport funding is used to give pupils experience of a wider range of sports and activities. Expert coaches provide exciting sessions which pupils enjoy. Teachers also benefit from good-quality professional development to improve their own skills in delivering effective physical education. This has enabled pupils to improve their skills and to take part in more competitive sporting events and festivals, including a local skipping festival and athletics tournament.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance requires improvement. Members of the governing body are fully involved in all aspects of the school's work through its committees and work with staff. Although governors are very conscientious in their work, they have not been as effective as they could be in ensuring that improvements in the quality of teaching are leading to improved outcomes for all pupils.

- Governors manage school staffing effectively. For example, the recent appointment of the special educational needs coordinator and additional support for pupils in Key Stage 1 have provided much-needed additional capacity.
- Governors have sought training to develop their skills and increase their understanding of what the data show about the performance of pupils and the quality of teaching. They accept that they need further training in this area. There are times when they too readily accept leaders’ positive interpretation of the data without probing in more detail. They have not shown enough determination to hold the headteacher to account where the pace of improvement has been too slow.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safer recruitment procedures are followed well and the school’s record-keeping systems are robust. Detailed records are kept of any referrals made to external agencies. All staff have received recent safeguarding training and so are aware of whom to inform if they have any concerns about any pupils. Site security and safety are taken seriously.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because they have not yet led to consistently good progress and outcomes for all pupils. Observations of learning in lessons, the work in pupils’ books and the school’s own assessments of pupils’ progress show that there is not enough good teaching in each key stage.
- The headteacher has started to improve the quality of teaching. However, teachers do not always have high expectations about the quality of work and amount of progress made by pupils because they are not using accurate assessments to inform their planning. Pupils do not make sufficient progress when too little is expected of them because work is not challenging enough. In addition to this, other pupils who need help and support to develop their skills are not always able to access appropriate activities to support their learning.
- Teachers’ use of questioning to check pupils’ understanding or to move pupils on to more challenging activities varies between year groups. In some classes, pupils are given too much time to complete simple tasks. This hinders their progress, especially that of those pupils who are most able and who are often given the same work as other pupils.
- There is not enough urgency about teaching phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make). Teachers and teaching assistants work steadily through a planned programme of sounds without considering how quickly pupils are learning. This slows the progress that some pupils make in developing their reading in early years and Key Stage 1.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write extensively and this affects how quickly they develop their writing skills. In addition, they do not have enough opportunities to plan and edit their work.
- Teachers’ application of the school’s marking and feedback policy is inconsistent and they are not always effective in guiding pupils about how to improve their work. As a result, pupils do not always know what they need to do to progress well. In addition, pupils in some classes cannot always read teachers’ comments in their books.
- In some classes, teaching assistants are not making a positive enough contribution to pupils’ learning. Class teachers are not taking responsibility for the coordination and monitoring of work relating to small groups. This is resulting in information about pupils’ progress not being checked well enough to inform teachers’ planning for their next steps.
- The teaching of reading has improved recently in Key Stage 2. The profile of reading has been raised considerably, and more pupils are enjoying reading. Staff hear pupils read more often, particularly those pupils who do not get additional support at home. This has resulted in more pupils making better progress in Key Stage 2.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good.

- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Opportunities for pupils to be reflective and proactive in their mission to consider the needs of others are embedded throughout the curriculum and acts of collective worship, but they also underpin the foundation of the school in its vision and ethos.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what it means to be an active and responsible citizen. This is because they have opportunities to participate in and organise community events. For example, pupils have visited Byker Lodge, a residential home, to make Christmas more enjoyable for residents, and work as 'Mini Vinnies' in the community, which includes supporting war veterans who need assistance.
- Pupils readily take on additional responsibilities in school. Roles include being members of the school council, buddies to younger children, which includes helping them to settle into school, hearing them read, and being classroom mentors. They carry out these roles sensibly and effectively.
- The large majority of parents agree that their children enjoy school and feel safe. They appreciate that the pupils are well cared for and praise the new headteacher for the improvements he has made since starting a year ago.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy, both in school, in the community and in the wider world. Pupils talk confidently about keeping themselves safe online and know who to go to if they need help or are worried.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils care for and respect each other. They help each other when they are on the playground by ensuring there is enough space for all of them to enjoy their activities and games without getting in each other's way. During these games, pupils cooperate well and share resources with consideration.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are very polite and well mannered. The small number of pupils who find it difficult to behave in an acceptable manner are dealt with effectively and are offered a good level of support to help them modify their behaviour.
- The school runs a busy breakfast club which encourages pupils to be punctual and to attend more regularly. This gives the pupils the chance to start the day in a very calm and relaxed manner which ensures that they are ready to learn when they start the day's lessons.
- Pupils understand that bullying can take place in different forms and show that they have been well taught about other potential dangers, including those posed by the internet. Pupils are confident that any bullying incidents that occur are dealt with by staff in an appropriate way.
- Pupils generally display good attitudes to their learning. They are keen and eager to work collaboratively and interact well with adults. Pupils' outlooks to learning are largely good, even when learning is not as challenging for some pupils as it might be. On these occasions, pupils become restless and less attentive but this does not happen routinely.
- Rates of attendance are getting closer to the national average. Pupils are keen to come to school and know that regular attendance and good punctuality support their learning. They know that attendance across the school needs to improve. There are a small number of pupils who do not attend regularly. Leaders have a range of new initiatives in place to address this; however they have been too slow to implement them.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement because pupils have not made enough progress from their starting points, particularly across early years, Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. This has resulted in many pupils not working at the expected standard for their age.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics (the relationship between letters and the sounds) is still below the national average and has declined over time. Furthermore, there are not enough boys who achieve this standard.
- Not enough pupils are attaining as well their peers nationally by the end of Year 2 because progress has not been fast enough throughout early years and Key Stage 1. Pupils are performing significantly below their peers nationally in all subjects and have been for the last three years. In addition to this, boys do not achieve as well as girls.

- At the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2015, not enough pupils attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because pupils, particularly the most able, are not challenged enough.
- Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are making better progress in upper Key Stage 2. However, they are not making good progress in other classes.
- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 improved in 2015 in mathematics, reading and English grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Pupils' attainment in reading is slightly below the national average. However, it has improved significantly over the last three years. Attainment in writing is below the national average and has not improved over time.
- Progress is still not consistently good in all classes and across all subjects. However, as a result of recent improvements in teaching and greater expectations from some teachers, progress is starting to rise. By the end of Year 6 in 2015, a greater proportion of pupils made at least expected progress from their starting points in Year 3, and more are doing better than this in reading and mathematics.
- Gaps in progress and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are closing, and are now in line with other pupils in the school.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Early years provision requires improvement because children's rates of progress from their different starting points are too variable.
- Children join Nursery with basic skills and knowledge below what is typical for their age. They get off to a relatively good start in Nursery, but the level and pace of learning stall as children move through the early years stage because expectation and challenge are not strong enough.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has improved over the last three years. However, it is still below average. Children are not catching up quickly enough which means that nearly half of the children are not ready to start Year 1.
- Children do not have enough opportunities to develop their reading, writing and number skills throughout the early years. There are limited opportunities for children to practise their writing skills and there are not enough prompts around the environment to encourage or motivate them to read.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Some staff do not make good use of children's assessments to plan learning and activities purposefully. However, in some sessions, the teacher and the teaching assistant have clearly defined roles. They have high expectations and use questioning effectively to develop children's learning.
- At times, opportunities to maximise the learning both indoors and outdoors are missed and children are engaged in low-level learning activities.
- Leadership and management require improvement as leaders do not have clear enough improvement plans to develop and enhance the overall quality of this provision. Leaders and staff have tried to make some improvements, but these are not prioritised or focused well enough on improving outcomes for children. Some recent improvements, for example the introduction of 'Talk Boost', have started to have a positive impact.
- There are very positive relationships established between children and adults. The care and support for children are well managed, and the behaviour and safety of children are good. Children are keen to do their best. They very quickly settle into the routines of the school and benefit from having an older 'buddy' who helps them.
- The teachers make sure that the environment is safe, and that children know how keep themselves safe. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are thorough and there are no breaches in welfare arrangements.
- There are effective systems in place to ensure a smooth transition into Nursery and Reception. Staff and leaders engage with parents well and keep them informed of the progress their children are making.

School details

Unique reference number	108509
Local authority	Newcastle
Inspection number	10007012

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Cunningham
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Paul Brown
Telephone number	0191 265 9881
Website	http://st-lawrencesprimary.co.uk/
Email address	admin@stlawrences.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 July 2012

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2014.
- The number of pupils on roll at the school is below average for primary schools.
- Children attend full time in the Nursery for three days a week, and full time in the Reception class for five days.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is very high. The pupil premium is additional government funding for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who do not have English as a first language is slightly above average.
- The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school manages its own breakfast club and offers a range of after-school activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons and also made some short visits to classrooms. The headteacher observed the quality of teaching in lessons with inspectors.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and reviewed the work in pupils' books alongside school leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break- and lunchtime was observed.
- Inspectors talked informally to pupils in lessons, around the school and held formal meetings with pupils from across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, class teachers, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, school improvement planning, documents monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's policies, and documentation relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents at the start and end of the day, in addition to six responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors considered six responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, in addition to the school's own survey of pupils' views.

Inspection team

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