

St Leonard's CofE (VA) First School

Brookfields Road, Ipstones, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST10 2LY

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
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

- Leaders and governors have not ensured that pupils have made consistently good progress since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not consistently check that teaching is leading to good outcomes. Most pupils do not build well enough on their starting points to achieve as well as they could.
- Pupils' knowledge of British values and different religions and cultures is at an early stage of development.
- Governors have not held leaders to account sufficiently or ensured that the school website contains the required information for parents.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are inconsistent and not all pupils try their best. This affects their rates of progress.
- Too often, teaching does not meet the needs of pupils in mixed-aged classes or of different abilities. Teachers do not challenge the most able pupils well enough and they accept work that is not well presented. Consequently, pupils do not make good progress over time.
- Phonics is not taught sufficiently often so not all pupils acquire the skills needed quickly enough. Some pupils do not read regularly or have reading books which match their ability.
- Standards in writing are below those expected for pupils' ages and lower than in reading and mathematics in most year groups. Pupils do not have the skills needed to draft or improve their work and, for some, the use of grammar, punctuation and spelling is weak.
- Boys achieve less well than girls in the early years and the outdoor area is underutilised in helping to develop early literacy and numeracy skills.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils with additional needs are well supported.
- Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is above average.
- Pupils feel safe and they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils know the importance of keeping healthy.
- Pupils are polite and helpful and all age groups mix well together.
- Parents have very positive views of the school and voluntary helpers support the school well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - training and support are provided for new teaching staff and subject leaders
 - regular checks are made on the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress
 - the curriculum builds on pupils' early knowledge of British values and different cultures and faiths so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain
 - governors hold the headteacher and other leaders fully to account and ensure that the school's website contains all statutory information.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan work which meets the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities so that all pupils achieve good outcomes
 - raise expectations and the level of challenge for pupils, especially for the most able
 - only accept work which is well presented and a pupil's best effort
 - adjust tasks as necessary during lessons so that pupils remain on task and demonstrate good attitudes to learning.
- Raise achievement in reading and writing by ensuring that:
 - a good-quality phonics lesson is taught regularly in the early years and key stage 1 and pupils' reading abilities are extended in key stage 2
 - pupils read frequently and have books which are closely matched to their different levels of ability
 - teachers make sure that pupils know how to draft, edit and improve their writing
 - teachers enable pupils to use and apply correct grammar, punctuation and spelling in their written work.
- Improve provision in the early years by ensuring that teachers plan activities, both indoors and outdoors, which engage boys and girls equally in order to close any attainment gaps.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- There have been some significant staffing changes in the last two years for this small school. This has caused some disruption to both classes. The new headteacher has begun to introduce more robust systems to arrest the decline in standards apparent in Year 2, and to improve teaching. For example, all staff are set annual targets to hold them to account and a new marking system has been introduced. However, it is too early to see the impact of these changes.
- The headteacher and governors detected the fall in standards and provided previous staff with support to help improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement. However, following staff changes in May 2016, the headteacher has been unable to provide training and support to new teaching staff, including in their subject leadership roles, due to her own substantial teaching commitment. Ongoing checks have not been carried out to ensure that current teaching is leading to improved outcomes.
- Pupils have a developing understanding about British values but this is not secure. Pupils are equally unsure about the differences between Christians and people who have different beliefs. Pupils have a good knowledge of Judaism but are less familiar with celebrations and customs of other world faiths. As a result, pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they should be. The headteacher is beginning to address this issue. A good example of this was seen during the inspection when younger pupils were taught about prayer and watched a video clip of how a Muslim and Jew pray.
- Leadership of different subjects is shared between the staff. Leadership of mathematics and special educational needs is effective. It has been less effective in English as shown in the declining standards in reading and writing. However, a new coordinator has been appointed and the local authority has already provided support in producing a new English policy.
- The headteacher's evaluation of how well the school is performing is mostly accurate. Teaching and outcomes are rightly judged as requiring improvement. She has identified areas of strength and those in need of development. A well-developed school action plan has been created in order to address the key priorities, including raising outcomes in the early years, Year 1 phonics and in writing. Initiatives such as 'welly Wednesday' and 'writing breakfast club' have been introduced to help tackle issues. It is too early to judge the impact of these initiatives.
- The headteacher has developed a good system for tracking and recording assessment of each pupil and each cohort, in partnership with other local schools. Pupils' progress is tracked and analysed and results shared with the governing body.
- The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects and adds to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong and all cooperate well together. Specialist teachers provide music and physical education lessons to enable pupils to learn to play an instrument, such as the ukulele or take up a sport, such as lacrosse. This supports pupils' cultural and physical development. Interesting topics, together with a range of visits, visitors and clubs enrich and supplement the curriculum. For example, older pupils visited a museum in connection

with their topic on the second world war and pupils listened intently in assembly to information about the work of the Christian Aid society.

- There are very few pupils who are disadvantaged in the school but the pupil premium is used effectively to help them achieve as well as others nationally. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who are not making enough progress.
- The sports premium grant is used well by leaders to promote regular exercise. It supports staff training, additional equipment and extra-curricular activities. It also funds specialist coaches to work with all age groups to teach them new skills and encourage participation in different sports. As a result, pupils enjoy sport and have a good understanding of how to stay healthy.
- Parents have positive views of the school. All of those who responded to Parent View said that their children were happy at school and felt safe. Most would recommend it to another parent and believe that their children are well taught, that they make good progress and that the school is well led and managed. Community links are also strong and several volunteers provide valuable support to the school in hearing pupils read and in running clubs, such as gardening club.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the school. It has provided good support to the new headteacher. It also commissioned a helpful, external review in March 2016. This review generated a detailed report and analysis of the school's performance. The findings have helped the governing body and headteacher tackle issues in teaching and inform their action planning.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school requires improvement. Governors have not held leaders to account sufficiently over time to ensure that outcomes for pupils have remained good.
- Governors receive very detailed and comprehensive information from the headteacher in her termly reports. These provide governors with an honest appraisal of how well the school is performing. A few also visit the school to talk to pupils and look at pupils' books to gather further information.
- Governors do not always fulfil their responsibilities, for example checking that statutory information is published on the school's website.
- Governors receive regular updates about pupils' progress and achievement. The assessment information shared is accurate and enables the governing body to identify where outcomes need improving and where teaching is not good enough. They are not afraid to tackle underperformance as they are dedicated and committed to ensuring that pupils at St Leonard's get the very best start in life.
- Governors are aware of how the pupil premium and sports funding are spent and the impact this is having on pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has developed a strong culture for keeping children safe. Appropriate checks are carried out for adults who work with pupils. Staff receive training and know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. The headteacher makes timely and swift referrals to the local authority where concerns are raised. Policies and procedures

are firmly in place. Records are well kept and stored securely. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies when required.

- Pupils are taught well to keep themselves safe. They have a good understanding of different dangers, including stranger danger and those associated with using the internet. They are confident to report incidents to adults or confide in them if they have any worries. The school site is well maintained and provides a safe environment for pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, teaching, learning and assessment have not been consistently good. Consequently, pupils have not made good progress over time, particularly in the last two years.
- Teaching requires improvement because teachers take too little account of the age differences within each class and the different abilities of pupils. On occasion, work is set with similar learning objectives without considering the outcomes and standards required by each year group in the national curriculum. For example, Year 1 pupils sometimes continue to do the same activities as children in the early years and pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 complete similar worksheets.
- Teachers' expectations, on occasion, are too low and work set is not always challenging enough, especially for the most able pupils. Work in pupils' books shows that, sometimes, pupils have to carry out a large number of calculations even when they demonstrate that they have already mastered the skills needed. Additionally, pupils are sometimes given work that is easier than previous work set. For example, Year 4 pupils were required to add and subtract multiples of 10 from two digit numbers when previous work showed they were capable of solving more complex calculations using subtraction, multiplication and division.
- Teachers do not consistently remind pupils about taking pride in their work. Too often, teachers accept work that is untidy or careless. This directly affects the effort made by pupils and the standard of work produced.
- Pupils, including those in key stage 2, are grouped by ability for phonics lessons. Most pupils use their phonic skills well to decode tricky words and to help them with their spelling. However, phonics is not taught sufficiently frequently, so pupils do not gain the skills needed as quickly as they should in the early years and key stage 1. Additionally, most pupils in key stage 2 have already surpassed the highest phonics phase and are confident and fluent readers, but are not given opportunities to develop higher order reading skills.
- Home reading records and discussion with pupils show that some pupils read at home, but not all. The most able readers are extremely well advanced for their age and read with high levels of expression, fluency and comprehension. However, only one out of six boys spoken to said they read at home regularly. Good reading habits are not, therefore, established. This is partly because reading books are not always matched closely enough to pupils' abilities. Some pupils have reading books which are too easy and others books which are too hard.
- Teachers provide an extensive range of opportunities to promote and develop pupils' writing skills. For example, following a visit to a war museum, pupils in Years 2, 3 and

4 wrote a recount of their trip. However, weaknesses in pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling reduced the overall quality of this work. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils are not given enough opportunity to draft, edit or improve their writing. This, again, limits the quality of the final piece.

- Positive relationships exist between adults and pupils. Support staff work in close partnership with teaching staff. They teach whole classes part-time or work with individuals and small groups. They also provide excellent support for pupils who have disabilities and ensure their physical needs are extremely well met.
- Outdoor learning has been successfully introduced to enrich the curriculum. Teachers plan exciting activities for 'welly Wednesday' to develop a range of different skills. For example, younger pupils were highly engaged and motivated when they were allowed to cut down and measure the enormous sunflowers they had previously planted in the garden area. They excitedly shouted 'Timber!' as the flowers fell to the ground. The activity led to excellent discussion, collaboration in groups, and lots of new science and mathematical knowledge. Pupils were so enthused that they continued to talk about the seeds they had collected from the sunflowers for the rest of the day.
- Although there are only a very small number of pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, teachers and other adults provide helpful support. The school works well with other agencies and accesses external support for individual pupils if needed, such as speech therapy. Pupils with additional needs are fully included in the life of the school and this demonstrates leaders' commitment to equality of opportunity.
- A new marking policy has been developed with support from the local authority. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and are beginning to provide pupils with helpful comments to improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' knowledge of British values and other cultures is at an early stage. School displays indicate that pupils learn about British society, for example, celebrating the Queen's birthday or voting for members of the school council, but this is not extended or built upon. Equally, pupils' knowledge of religions and cultures different from their own is weak. Curriculum plans do not show how or when these elements are taught. Consequently, pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they could be.
- Pupils are well cared for and happy in school. Adults have a detailed knowledge of individuals and their families. Relationships between all adults and pupils are strong.
- Pupils demonstrate self-confidence and are keen to take on additional responsibilities in school. For example, older pupils act as 'buddies' to younger pupils, supervise the sports shed at breaktimes and set up the hall for collective worship.
- Pupils have an increasing understanding of different types of bullying, appropriate to their age. They know that unkind behaviour can be through actions or words. Pupils

are clear that bullying does not happen at St Leonard's but are confident that if problems arise, they can report them to staff who will resolve any problems swiftly.

- Pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of healthy living. Pupils know that fruit, vegetables, milk and water should be included in a healthy diet. A wide range of equipment is available from the sports shed at breaktimes to promote pupils' fitness. The 'daily mile', which pupils walk around the grounds, is also successful in teaching them the importance of regular exercise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- On occasion, pupils do not demonstrate good attitudes to learning. When work does not challenge or interest them, some pupils disengage and drift off task. This directly affects the progress they make. Some pupils do not make as much effort as they should and some do not take pride in keeping their books neat and tidy.
- In terms of their conduct, pupils are polite, helpful and respectful. They behave well in lessons and around school. Pupils of all ages play and mix well together at break and lunchtime. Sensible monitors ensure that sports equipment is used properly at playtimes and that it is stored neatly when playtime ends.
- Pupils understand and follow the school's behaviour policy. Awards and ticks are used as incentives to promote good behaviour. Adults manage pupils' behaviour well and incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Records show there have been no exclusions.
- The school breakfast club provides a valuable resource for families who use it. Pupils are well supervised and are provided with a nutritious breakfast to prepare them for the day ahead. Other pupils join the breakfast club to practise literacy skills before school starts. Individual targets are set and focus on pupils learning new spellings. This activity is managed well but pupils do not yet apply these skills in their general writing.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is shown in their above-average attendance. Leaders track the attendance of each individual carefully and swiftly follow up any absences. School records show that any attendance issues that arise are usually linked to medical reasons.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes fluctuate due to the small numbers of pupils in different year groups and the disproportionate impact this has on data. However, overall attainment at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average in 2015.
- There are a significant number of most-able pupils in the school. These pupils do not always make the progress they should from their starting points; this is because the levels of challenge needed are not always provided by teachers, and pupils are not moved on to new skills quickly enough.
- In 2016, provisional assessment information shows that attainment at the end of Year 2 was above average in mathematics, broadly average in reading, but below average in writing. At the end of Year 4, the majority of pupils reached the standards expected in mathematics with a good proportion exceeding these standards. However, fewer pupils reached the standards expected in reading and writing and no pupils exceeded the standard expected in writing.

- In current year groups, attainment in writing is lower than reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is too slow for some pupils and the most able do not do well enough.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the school to reflect their progress as a group; but individually, these pupils make good progress from their starting points and are well supported.
- Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check were below the national average in 2014 and 2015. However, provisional results for 2016 show that all pupils who were assessed achieved the level required.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Most children join the school in Reception Year with skills and knowledge which are at least typical for their age. There are some who have skills and knowledge which are above those typically expected. However, children do not always build sufficiently on these entry skills and their progress requires improvement. Over time, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been broadly in line with the national average.
- Over time, boys achieve less well than girls in the early years, especially in reading and writing. While boys enjoy the wide range of construction toys available, adults do not ensure that boys spend as much time on reading and writing activities as the girls. Limited use is made of the outdoor area to promote early literacy and numeracy skills.
- Leadership and teaching of the early years require improvement. Children do not build sufficiently on their starting points and activities are not always planned which cater for the most able.
- Assessment is accurate and takes place regularly but is not used well for planning activities that meet the needs of different groups. In accordance with school policy, learning journals contain a good range of photographic evidence and examples of children's work. Adults plan interesting activities, which cover the different areas of learning in the early years curriculum. Regular observations are carried out. As a result, staff know what children can do and what they need to do to develop further.
- Effective transition arrangements are in place and these ensure that children settle quickly at school. Several visits are arranged so that children get used to coming in to school. Close links exist with the local nursery so teachers have accurate information about the children when they start school.
- Some interesting areas have been established in the classroom; for example, the role-play area of Samuel Pepys' house to support the children learning about the Fire of London. Children thoroughly enjoy other role play areas, including the kitchen area for making pretend cakes and biscuits. This strongly enhances their creative development.
- Children behave well in the early years. Early routines are established and children quickly become confident learners and develop independent skills. They listen carefully and respond quickly to instructions. They are respectful to staff and other children and they cooperate well with each other.
- Children are safe and well cared for. They are closely supervised by adults and the welfare requirements are fully met. Good levels of hygiene are maintained.

School details

Unique reference number	124381
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10001063

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	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Evans
Headteacher	Kelly Stanesby
Telephone number	01538 266292
Website	www.st-leonards-ipstones.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-leonards-ipstones.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 November 2011

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about special educational needs and its complaints policy on its website.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- All pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. There are no pupils who are supported by a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Children in the early years attend full-time and are taught in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. There is one other class, which caters for pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4.

- The headteacher took up her post in September 2015 but has been a staff member for several years at the school. She teaches three days a week. There is one other full-time teacher in the school, who oversees English. There are two other staff members who teach pupils part-time but one is currently on maternity leave.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in both classes. She saw eight parts of lessons, two of which were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- The inspector met with pupils and heard a selection of pupils read. She looked at examples of pupils' work in their books and spoke to pupils about their learning. There were no responses to the online pupil questionnaire.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and the English leader. Informal discussions were also held with support staff.
- The inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- The opinions of parents were considered through 15 responses on Parent View, and conversations with parents at a mother and toddler session held in the school.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, development plans, information about managing teachers' performance and staff training records. Minutes of meetings of the governing body and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed.

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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