

St Alban's Church of England Primary School

St Albans Close, Ashmore Park, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV11 2PF

Inspection dates

21–22 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders, including governors, failed to ensure that pupils' education did not suffer from the disruptions that occurred at the start of this academic year. Cumulative difficulties in retaining and recruiting leaders and teachers led to a rapid decline in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Standards in key stage 1 are inadequate, and many younger pupils fail to make the progress they should in phonics because the teaching is inconsistent and often poorly planned.
- Teachers rarely check pupils' progress during lessons effectively, and as a result they do not change pace or direction to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Leaders do not use the results of assessments or the observation of pupils in lessons effectively to plan additional support for pupils who are at risk of falling behind.
- Recent initiatives have begun to reduce pupils' absence, but attendance remains low.
- Too much teaching over the last year has been weak. Teachers have set work which is not securely based on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, and the least able pupils often struggle as a result.
- There are gaps in leadership across the school, and there is no improvement plan that accurately reflects the school's current position.
- Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to learn from their mistakes and take on responsibility for their own learning.
- Work in subjects other than English and mathematics does not give pupils sufficient opportunity to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Teaching assistants' skills and their deployment often do not allow them to have the greatest possible impact on pupils' learning.
- Leaders do not communicate reliably with parents about school organisation or about how they can contribute to their children's progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have succeeded in re-establishing basic expectations for effective teaching and assessment. As a result, the quality of teaching is rising, especially at key stage 2. Inspectors observed some strengths in current classroom practice.
- Pupils' behaviour at social times and in lessons is improving, and is often good. Safeguarding is effective.
- Many children in the early years make strong progress from low starting points.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - all teachers set work which is securely based on what pupils, and especially pupils with the lowest levels of prior attainment, already understand and can do
 - through questioning or otherwise, teachers check effectively on pupils' progress during lessons, so that they can adjust the learning when appropriate
 - leaders and teachers consistently plan so that the skills of teaching assistants have the maximum impact on pupils' learning
 - work in subjects other than English and mathematics contributes strongly to the development of pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Boost pupils' progress by ensuring that lessons allow pupils the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, and by encouraging them to take a greater responsibility for improving their own work.
- Urgently address weaknesses in the teaching of phonics so that pupils in the younger years make strong progress in their early reading and writing, and the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check is in line with the national average.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including that of governors, by:
 - securing effective leaders at all levels who can guide staff and drive improvements in the quality of teaching across the school, including in the early years
 - ensuring that up-to-date plans are in place, which allow leaders, governors and others to judge accurately the school's progress in addressing its key priorities
 - communicating better with parents, so that they have a fuller opportunity to contribute to their children's learning
 - using information gained from assessments and classroom observation more effectively to adapt the additional support that the school provides for pupils, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - extending the range of training for staff, including providing teaching assistants with all the knowledge and skills to be successful in the tasks they perform, and giving the opportunity for emerging strengths in teaching to be shared more widely across the school
 - consolidating recent procedures to address pupils' absence, so that the rate of attendance continues to improve.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate because leaders have failed to sustain an acceptable standard of education during this academic year, and standards in key stage 1 remain low. Leaders and governors did not respond promptly or effectively to the difficulties that the school has faced. Although there has been a period of recovery, the school faces further changes in leadership, and there is no detailed plan to address how the school will move forward from its current position. A tier of leadership is effectively missing.
- In the autumn term of 2016, the executive headteacher focused her attention on the federated school, where there was no head of school. At the same time, the local authority required St Alban's Church of England Primary School to admit a large number of pupils, some presenting challenging behaviour, into different year groups. This necessitated the reorganisation of classes and the opening of additional teaching spaces. Leaders did not respond to these challenges effectively. Staff, including the head of school and other leaders, chose to leave the school, disrupting teaching and creating large gaps in the management of an already difficult situation.
- The exceptionally high turnover of staff has placed other strains on the leadership of the school. Staff training, by necessity, has focused on the very basics of effective teaching. Although the physical education (PE) and sport premium has been well spent on providing some extra-curricular sport and teaching pupils to swim, there has been little opportunity to ensure that improvements are sustained by developing the skills of permanent staff. Pupils and their parents told inspectors that after-school clubs provide few opportunities.
- Current leaders have established a pattern of regular assessment for pupils' work against agreed standards, and some teachers' judgements have been checked with those made by teachers in other schools. However, the results of these assessments are not used to identify pupils who would benefit from additional support. Leaders have a clear view of pupils' progress in some, but not all, year groups.
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically of the range of subjects they study, including information technology, design technology, physical education and music. However, the variable quality of work in some subjects, and in particular the low expectations for literacy and numeracy, mean that the curriculum is not as effective as it should be in developing pupils' skills.
- Leaders in general promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness effectively and ensure that they are tolerant of others' views and beliefs. Pupils understand British values well, although they would welcome more opportunity to contribute their views on how the school might be improved.
- Leaders are increasingly effective at identifying the special educational needs of individual pupils and planning additional provision. They allocate additional money to support these pupils sensibly. However, expenditure would be more effective if leaders also checked routinely on the impact of the help that the school provides and made sure that all teaching assistants have the full range of skills they require.

- Although leaders have retained the general confidence of the school community, some parents who spoke with inspectors complained about poor communication about routine matters, such as the dates for special assemblies. Leaders do not do enough to ensure that parents support pupils' learning at home, for example by listening to them read.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium effectively towards overcoming disadvantaged pupils' social and emotional barriers to learning and providing additional teaching. The allocation of the grant is clearly based on the results of national research. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make the same progress as their classmates, and the key to their now catching up with other pupils nationally is better classroom teaching.
- The local authority did not recognise weaknesses in the leadership of the school soon enough, but has subsequently supported the school well. More recently, it has used the school improvement board to hold leaders and governors to account, and plan improvements. Officers have conducted incisive evaluations of the school's performance.
- Over recent months, leaders have exercised good judgement in prioritising the establishment of clear expectations for teaching and sequences of lessons that are in broad terms matched to pupils' ages and abilities. They have provided checklists against which teachers and pupils can judge their progress. Leaders are realistic and recognise that these are first steps. They have provided new and temporary teachers with targets so that they appreciate what they can achieve.
- In the light of current weaknesses in the leadership of teaching and learning, newly qualified teachers may not be appointed until the school has a team of fully effective leaders.

Governance of the school

- Over time, governance has not been effective.
- In the autumn term of 2016, the federation, of which the school is part, faced some notable challenges. Governors' response did not secure strong leadership in the school, and, as a result, standards of teaching and achievement fell rapidly. In conjunction with the local authority, governors sought effective assistance from local teaching schools and belatedly held leaders to account. Although in the short term this increased rigour led to further staff turnover, it also provided a sound basis on which to rebuild.
- Governors know the school well, visit regularly and receive detailed reports from the executive headteacher and the local authority on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. However, they currently have no plan or specific targets against which to judge the impact of leaders' actions.
- The governing body makes sure that the school's policies and procedures keep pupils safe in all respects. They ensure that the right checks have been made on all those who come into contact with children. Governors make sure that the school site is safe, and that leaders assess possible risks for any school trips.
- Governors check in general terms on how leaders spend the additional money, such as the pupil premium, provided for particular groups of pupils. They have made sure that

the school manages within its budget, despite the unexpected rise in pupil numbers. They make appropriate arrangements to manage the performance of the executive headteacher.

- Records from recent months show that governors are now providing an appropriate level of challenge, at least to leaders' general strategy. They acknowledge the weaknesses in their past responses and are actively seeking to amend the governance of the school to enable governors to be better placed to provide rigorous scrutiny and prompt support for those who lead the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's arrangements meet all statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. The school's policies are up to date, and staff, including temporary staff and those recently appointed, are trained according to the latest guidelines. Staff are vigilant and able to identify and support any pupil at risk.
- Inspectors found that staff keep detailed records, which are stored securely. They work well with parents and other agencies to help pupils whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate because for much of this academic year, teachers set work which was not securely based on what pupils could already do. Weaknesses in assessment meant that teachers and leaders have not known what progress pupils were making. Poor planning has meant that ideas and activities have not been linked together effectively. The result has been that pupils have struggled to learn from their mistakes and build up their skills. Achievement at key stage 1 remains inadequate.
- Teachers often set work which is either too hard or too easy, at least for some pupils in the class. They rarely check, for example by asking questions of particular individuals, whether pupils understand the work, and so whether there is a need to explain the topic again or provide more challenging tasks. As a result, pupils make much less progress than they should.
- The teaching of phonics is not well planned. Although there is a scheme in place, and pupils often develop an understanding of letters and sounds in individual lessons, teachers do not check sufficiently carefully on pupils' progress and make sure that learning in phonics builds up pupils' knowledge systematically. Teachers who spoke with inspectors were uncertain about how to link their teaching of phonics with other aspects of literacy.
- Teachers give pupils very limited opportunity to develop their literacy and numeracy skills by applying them in other subject areas. Writing in topic books is typically of a much inferior quality than that completed in English.
- Teaching assistants, some of whom are new to the school or on temporary contracts, often do not make the contribution to pupils' learning that they should. This is partly

because teachers across all three key stages do not give sufficiently careful thought to how the teaching assistants can be deployed to have the greatest impact on the progress of individual pupils or groups of pupils. It is also because the assistants have not received the training they require to help them to become fully effective.

- Teachers provide feedback on pupils' work, but sometimes this is too general to provide much guidance on how to improve. On occasion, the lack of continuity in the programme of work further reduces pupils' opportunities to learn from their own mistakes.
- Undoubtedly, the quality of teaching has improved over recent months, especially at key stage 2. A committed team of teachers is seeking to implement current leaders' clear expectations. Work is generally appropriate for most pupils in the class, and teachers assess pupils' achievements against a checklist of skills. Pupils understand increasingly well what they are learning and how they can succeed.
- Inspection evidence confirmed leaders' records that show that, even in the year groups where progress has begun to pick up, there is a long way to go. Teachers' subject knowledge and ability to use learning time wisely are variable. Although there is some practical application of mathematics, there is only the occasional opportunity for pupils to reason mathematically. Teachers sometimes lack the skills to provide work which provides the right level of challenge for the most able pupils, the least able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils are not benefiting consistently from homework that develops their interests and skills. The school has not established good practices to encourage pupils to read at home.

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 are safe in school, and feel safe, although some recall the challenging behaviour that some older pupils displayed when they first joined, earlier this academic year. Inevitably, some feel unsettled by the enormous turnover of staff.
- School records show that bullying and aggressive behaviour are rare, and this was confirmed in discussion with pupils. They have confidence that staff would deal effectively with any difficulties that might arise.
- Pupils lack a little confidence and determination as learners. They are dutiful, but some are still not fully aware of the purpose of the work they are doing or how they can succeed. Many are not yet sufficiently interested in their own work to take some of the responsibility for improving it. During the inspection, some pupils used their initiative in class, for example to fetch dictionaries or word banks, but others did not. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were not committed to reading for pleasure.
- The school teaches pupils about the dangers posed by the internet. Pupils recall a visit from the police to reinforce the importance of privacy and not responding to contact from strangers. Pupils learn to swim, although some who have joined the school in

older year groups have missed out on this. They are aware of the importance of healthy eating.

- During the inspection, when pupils spoke at any length in class, their peers listened courteously and patiently. Pupils treat adults with respect. They recognise the responsibility to value people who are different from themselves.
- In general, Year 6 pupils feel well prepared for secondary school, although they believe that the work might be harder. However, the school provides few clear opportunities for pupils to take specific responsibilities, and pupils do not feel that they have much influence on decision-making in the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In some lessons, teachers do not apply the school's expectations consistently enough, and pupils talk over the teacher and each other during discussion. Pupils confirmed that lessons are occasionally disrupted in this way, but reported that teachers generally deal with this sort of behaviour successfully.
- During the inspection, pupils behaved well in the corridors and at social times. They were energetic rather than boisterous at breaktimes, and stopped playing immediately staff blew the whistle. School records show, however, that in recent months a small number of pupils have required support to improve their playground behaviour.
- Attendance during the academic year 2015–16 was well below the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was lower still. During the first part of the current academic year, attendance only rose a little, but over the last two months it has risen more sharply.
- This rise reflects a very recent initiative to tackle absence, including the appointment of a part-time attendance officer and rewards for classes and individuals who attend well. However, inspection evidence showed that the new procedures are not fully embedded, and more work needs to be done to tackle the longstanding pattern of poor attendance.
- Pupils and staff told inspectors that behaviour is improving, and staff have supported successfully a number of pupils who joined the school displaying behaviour which was sometimes aggressive. When teachers set work that fully engages pupils' interest, they concentrate very well and display a keen desire to succeed.
- Leaders use fixed-term exclusion very rarely indeed and have not excluded a pupil permanently in recent years.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes for pupils are inadequate because, during the course of this academic year, the rate of pupils' progress fell very sharply, and has only recently begun to recover. Standards reached by pupils in key stage 1 remain unacceptably low. The high level of pupil mobility has added to the challenge of raising standards, but does not in itself account for the school's poor outcomes.

- In 2016, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check fell to below the national average. Information supplied by the school shows that in 2017 it has fallen even more sharply. This reflects the disorganised and ineffective teaching of phonics in the younger years.
- Last year's published results showed that the proportions of pupils who left key stage 1 having met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. Again, school leaders reported that in 2017 these proportions are likely to fall further. Very few pupils are working at greater depth.
- Work seen by inspectors showed that, in key stage 1, teachers' expectations are too low. Pupils rarely have the opportunity to develop their writing stamina by writing at length and, when they do, they often fail to apply their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar effectively. Handwriting and presentation are often poor. In mathematics, the sequence of work does not give pupils the necessary opportunity to develop their skills.
- In both key stage 1 and key stage 2, teachers do not plan pupils' work in foundation subjects so that it contributes to the development of their literacy skills. Inspectors found very little evidence that pupils are required to apply their mathematical skills in subjects such as science or geography. Teachers currently keep no record of pupils' achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Older pupils in the school are competent readers and have good access to books. They explained to inspectors that staff listen to them read in school but do not expect them to take books home. They expressed little interest in reading for pleasure. Staff are therefore not doing enough to ensure that pupils read widely and frequently.
- The relatively few most-able pupils make variable progress. In some instances, work is not sufficiently challenging to build on what they can already do. On other occasions, teachers stimulate their imaginations and they respond well to the developing practice of setting three different sets of expectations in each classroom. For example, in both Year 4 and Year 5, inspectors heard the most able pupils planning ambitious pieces of creative writing.
- Information supplied by the school shows that disadvantaged pupils, who make up half the school population, achieve as well as other pupils in the school. This reflects the effective expenditure of the pupil premium to overcome barriers to learning and put these pupils on the same footing as their peers. However, there is a long way to go before they make better progress than other pupils nationally, and so begin to fulfil their full potential. This picture applies equally to the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Better identification of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has led to an improvement in their progress, but this still remains highly variable. Some pupils have made very rapid progress in recent months. Others, in common with less-able pupils, fall behind because teachers do not have all the skills to translate the information they are given about pupils' abilities into tasks that precisely meet those pupils' needs. As leaders are aware, better monitoring of how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are learning will enable staff to refine how they are taught, and so further improve their progress.
- In 2016, key stage 2 pupils left the school having made progress which was average in reading, writing and in mathematics. Information supplied by the school suggests that most key stage 2 pupils are once again making progress which is broadly in line with

that seen nationally. However, workbooks seen by inspectors showed that there remains too much variation, both over time and within the same class.

- Currently, pupils are not well prepared for secondary school. Their slight lack of self-confidence, the variable depth to which they have studied foundation subjects and the limited programme of extra-curricular activities all risk putting pupils at something of a disadvantage.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The majority of children who start both the Nursery Year and the Reception Year do so with skills and abilities which are below those typical for their age. Children leave the Nursery Year to go to other settings, and some join the Reception class from other nurseries.
- The leadership and management of the early years provision are not strong enough. Staff were unable to provide reliable information about children's achievement. This means that they lack the overview that would be an important first step in planning to improve the provision. Staff are unaware of how the pupil premium is spent in the early years. They reported that communication between adults working in the setting is not reliable.
- Earlier this year, leaders organised professional development for adults in the early years, but discussions with staff showed that some of the ideas they had introduced have not been implemented effectively. Gaps in the skills of some of the adults working in the setting mean that they are not as effective as they need to be in fulfilling some of their roles.
- The teaching of phonics requires improvement. Teachers do not plan the order in which they introduce new ideas thoughtfully enough, so that sometimes children do not make the links between the different aspects of early literacy.
- In general, the quality of teaching in the early years is too variable. Many activities are well planned to engage children, and staff introduce new learning effectively, with clear explanation. Sometimes, staff display sound subject knowledge and introduce children well to new language and subject-specific vocabulary. Teachers plan work which covers a good range of topics and responds well to children's interests. However, adults often do not check how well the children are learning and so do not support them as promptly and effectively as they should. For example, in a phonics session, staff did not make sure that children were holding their pencils correctly and forming their letters in the correct way.
- Most children make expected progress, although some make stronger progress. The proportion of children who leave the early years having attained a good level of development has been in line with the national average over recent years.
- Relationships between staff and children in the provision are very strong. Adults succeed in creating a calm, nurturing environment with established routines. As a result, children settle quickly. Staff celebrate children's successes and reinforce their positive attitudes and achievements. They generally work well with parents, who told inspectors that they are increasingly confident in the setting.
- Children generally behave well. They feel happy and secure and treat adults and each

other with respect. Occasionally, they become restless if they are asked to concentrate for too long.

- The indoor learning environment is attractive and used successfully to promote children's learning. For example, during the inspection, there was an area in which children were encouraged to adopt the role of scientists and investigate the properties of mini-beasts. However, the outdoor area is underdeveloped, and children made little use of it during the inspection.
- The staff look after children well. Child protection procedures are fully in place, and there are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements. However, although children generally learn well in the early years, staff currently do not have the thorough knowledge of children's achievements to provide a smooth transition into key stage 1.

School details

Unique reference number	104364
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10025184

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Watson
Executive Headteacher	Helen Morris
Telephone number	01902 558825
Website	http://www.stalbansprimary.co.uk
Email address	stalbanprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 February 2015

Information about this school

- St Alban's Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Its roll has risen sharply this academic year. The number of pupils it has admitted at other than normal points of transfer is equivalent to about a third of its current roll.
- St Alban's Church of England Primary School is federated with St Thomas's Church of England Primary School. The two schools share an executive headteacher and a governing body.
- Children attend full time in the Reception class, but for the morning only in the Nursery class. Many pupils join the Reception class from other nursery settings.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Other pupils come from a number of different ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is well above average.
- The proportion pupils who are identified as having special educational needs and/or

disabilities is slightly above average.

- During this academic year, the large majority of teachers, including the head of school, have left. Some of the teachers who replaced them have recently accepted permanent positions in the school. An interim head of school took up her post in January 2017, and will leave at the end of the summer term. A new head of school will start in September, initially on a temporary basis.
- Some of the recent support for the school has been provided by a national leader in education and specialist leaders in education.
- In 2016, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 12 lessons and during one extended learning walk. Four observations and the learning walk were conducted jointly with school leaders. The inspectors also observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- The inspectors held discussions with school leaders, class teachers, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the executive headteacher of a local teaching school.
- Two groups of pupils met with the inspectors. Inspectors also spoke with many other pupils informally. The inspectors listened to pupils in several year groups read.
- The inspectors scrutinised in depth all the work produced by a number of pupils in Year 2 and Year 5. They also looked at a wider number of workbooks in lessons. The inspectors considered information about some pupils' current performance.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; minutes of meetings of the governing body, and the school improvement board established by the local authority; reports on visits made by local authority officers; policies; and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- Inspectors also took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View and the comments made using the free-text facility. Inspectors spoke to a substantial number of parents delivering their children to school on the second day of the inspection. There were no responses to the questionnaire for staff, or the questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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