

# Our Lady Catholic Primary School

Woodhall Lane, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 3TF

## Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 is not good. The results of the key stage 2 national tests in 2017 showed that pupils made much less progress than other pupils nationally in English and mathematics.
- Pupils make variable progress throughout the school in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects. The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is also inconsistent.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not always high enough. Where this is the case, pupils do not make the rapid progress that they should.
- Leaders and governors do not monitor the effectiveness of teaching methods (interventions) for individual pupils who have fallen behind closely enough. Some interventions are allowed to continue for too long when they are not having enough impact on pupils' progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has managed to maintain the school's good quality of education overall during a time of unprecedented challenges.
- Pupils are starting to make better progress as a result of recent improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics and reading comprehension.
- Pupils rightly feel safe at school. There is very little bullying and, when it does occur, it is sorted out quickly by staff.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. The proportion of children that reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is above the national average.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly well. Pupils are kind, thoughtful, respectful and well-mannered as a result.
- Pupils behave very well. They follow the school's rules because expectations are high and consequences are applied consistently.
- Phonics is taught very well. Pupils make good progress in learning to recognise words in order to read fluently. Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check are above the national average.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that measures that are put in place to help targeted pupils are the right ones to help them make faster progress by:
  - monitoring their effectiveness closely and frequently
  - taking prompt action to change or adapt what has been put in place if it is not working well enough.
- Raise the proportion of pupils who make rapid progress in English, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects by ensuring that:
  - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - there is always enough challenge for pupils, particularly the most able.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher has created a successful and happy school. She has shown extraordinary resilience in order to manage an unprecedented number of staffing issues and the significant challenges that have faced the school. Although outcomes are now less strong than they have been, the headteacher has ensured that the downturn has been halted quickly and outcomes are now improving once again. As a result of very strong leadership, there has been no impact on pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning.
- The very high number of periods of planned leave, alongside challenges that could not have been foreseen, resulted in disruption in almost every year group. This led to variation in the quality of teaching and outcomes that require improvement. The school's leaders focused well on ensuring that the quality of teaching remained as good as possible throughout the school during these absences. The quality of teaching is now good overall, once again, but outcomes have yet to catch up.
- The headteacher has created a school that has a very caring and supportive ethos. All staff consistently show pupils how to behave towards others by modelling such behaviour themselves. Everyone is expected to treat other people with respect and courtesy. Being kind and considerate is very important at Our Lady.
- The headteacher is very well supported by the school's long-serving assistant headteacher and senior teacher. The assistant headteacher has a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The impact of her work is clear, for example, in the improvements in phonics teaching. The school's senior teacher is taking a leading role in improving the effectiveness of mathematics teaching.
- The school offers a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. Personal, social and health education forms a 'golden thread' that runs through the school's curriculum. It is taught particularly well and the impact of this is clearly evident in pupils' manners and their attitudes to learning. The school has chosen to enrich its curriculum by holding a variety of themed weeks such as 'British values week' and 'arts and crafts week'. Leaders have found that this approach boosts pupils' enthusiasm for the subjects that they learn about.
- The headteacher and assistant headteacher know each disadvantaged pupil well as an individual. They think carefully about each pupil's specific needs and what should be put in place for them. For example, for one pupil, funding might be used to purchase a particular piece of equipment while for another it might be used to pay for time for the pupil to work individually with a member of staff.
- The sport premium is spent effectively. The funding is used in a variety of ways such as to pay for the school's membership of the local sports partnership. This has provided many more opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive games and tournaments. The funding has also been used to pay for sports coaches. This has broadened the range and availability of sports clubs that are offered to pupils.
- Leaders do not monitor the effectiveness of interventions closely enough. That is, when additional support is put in place for a particular pupil because they have fallen behind, leaders do not check frequently enough to see whether it is helping that pupil to make

more rapid progress. As a result, some approaches are allowed to go on for too long when they are not having enough impact. When this is the case, pupils do not make the rapid progress that they should as a result of the additional help they receive.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors know the school very well. They have a very good understanding of both its strengths and weaknesses. They are clear about their purpose and what their role is in helping the school to improve. Governors understand very well the need to balance supporting leaders with holding them to account.
- The school's governors bring a wide range of knowledge and experience to their roles. For example, one governor is a retired secondary school headteacher and another is an accountant. This breadth of experience helps to ensure that the governing body has the skills it needs to be effective.
- Governors do not check the effectiveness of targeted teaching approaches for individual pupils closely enough. They do not monitor sufficiently whether initiatives and approaches have a direct impact on the progress that targeted pupils make.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Relationships between the adults in the school and pupils are strong. This is a key strength in helping pupils to be safe. Pupils trust their teachers and know that they can talk to them about any problems they might have. Pupils know that staff will help them if any problems arise, whether at school or at home.
- The headteacher has a very good understanding of her role as the school's designated safeguarding lead. The school's records of child protection concerns show that staff are vigilant and notice possible signs of both abuse and neglect. Records also show that the headteacher takes timely and appropriate action in response to concerns when necessary.
- The school has strong systems in place to ensure that only suitable people are employed to work with children. All the necessary checks are carried out before a potential new member of staff is allowed to take up their post. The school's single central record of pre-employment checks is well maintained and meets statutory requirements.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff know their pupils very well. As a result, classrooms are positive and happy places where pupils behave well and are keen to learn. Pupils know that they can ask for help and that they will be given the support they need. Pupils trust their teachers and know that their classrooms are safe places where it is okay to get things wrong.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. Leaders identified this as an area that required improvement and took effective action to do so. The school has introduced a new programme of study to ensure that pupils develop a thorough and complete

understanding of the fundamental aspects of the subject, such as addition and subtraction. Although it is early days, the school has found that the approach is working well, both in encouraging pupils' interest in mathematics and in improving the progress they make.

- Teaching assistants support pupils very well and have a positive impact on the progress that pupils make. For example, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are able to be successful in lessons because teaching assistants simplify and clarify work so that they are able to understand it fully. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to the benefit of the pupils in the class.
- Phonics is taught well. Teachers have very strong subject knowledge and are skilled in teaching this key area. For example, they enunciate sounds clearly so that pupils are able to identify the different phonemes in words easily. They provide plentiful opportunities for pupils to blend sounds together to read them and segment words to identify the individual sounds in order to spell them.
- Leaders identified that although good phonics teaching meant that pupils were able to recognise words in order to read texts, their comprehension skills were less well developed. Leaders have taken effective action to address this. Teachers now focus more closely on helping pupils develop skills such as predicting what will happen next and inferring the meaning of less obvious parts of the texts that they read. This is starting to have an impact on pupils' progress.
- Teachers are effective in ensuring that they develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at every opportunity. The school's personal, social, health and citizenship teaching runs throughout the curriculum, as well as being a subject in its own right. The impact of this can be seen clearly in pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Teachers plan their teaching well. They ensure that lessons have the right resources to enable pupils to learn more easily. For example, in mathematics pupils are given a variety of appropriate apparatus to help them to calculate sums and to see patterns in numbers. Teachers think carefully about the tasks that they give pupils to do to ensure that they capture pupils' interest.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are not always high enough. When this is the case, pupils are given work to do that is too easy and does not provide sufficient challenge. For example, the most able pupils are sometimes given additional work to do when they have finished their work that is 'more of the same' rather than something that is more difficult and challenging.
- As a result of the very high number of teacher absences, for a variety of valid reasons, there has been disruption in almost every year group. This led to some variation in the quality of teaching and a drop in pupils' outcomes. The overall quality of teaching has now improved and is good overall. Outcomes are yet to catch up with the improvements in teaching.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

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

- Pupils rightly feel very safe at school and their parents agree. Pupils say that there is very little bullying and, when it does happen, it is sorted out quickly by staff. One parent spoke for many by saying, 'My kids are very happy at school, have lots of friends and feel safe. They love coming to this school. Any concerns or questions are resolved very quickly.'
- The strong relationships between staff and pupils help to keep pupils safe. Pupils know that they can always speak to any member of staff if they are worried about something, whether at home or at school. Pupils know that staff will listen to them and that they will help.
- Pupils show excellent attitudes to equality. They are taught very well to value all people as individuals and not to judge anyone on their physical or other characteristics, such as the characteristics protected by law. In a meeting with the lead inspector, pupils spoke with great maturity about civil rights leaders that they had been taught about. One pupil described Martin Luther King as 'an inspiration' and said that we should judge people 'by the content of their character rather than by the colour of their skin'.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They settle quickly at the start of lessons and listen carefully to what adults say to them. Pupils are keen and willing, and try hard with their work. Pupils take care to present their work neatly.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in their classrooms and throughout the school. They listen carefully to what teachers say and follow the instructions that they are given. It is very rare for a lesson to be disrupted by poor behaviour.
- The school's system for encouraging good behaviour is used consistently and understood fully by pupils. Pupils look forward to enjoying their 'golden time' session each Friday, a reward for their good behaviour throughout the week. Pupils understand that losing some or all of their 'golden time' will be the consequence of not following the school's rules.
- Pupils cooperate well and enjoy each other's company. They work well together in their classrooms, helping and encouraging each other where appropriate. Pupils enjoy playing together at breaktimes. They are kind to each other and this makes Our Lady a happy place for pupils to be.
- Most pupils attend school regularly and on time. The overall rate of attendance was just below the national average last year. Leaders take appropriate action to encourage good attendance and to deal with absence. For example, there are clear examples of pupils' attendance improving greatly after the school has sent a letter about individual absence being too high.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Results of the 2017 national tests were disappointing for the school. Pupils' progress in reading was well below the national average and, in writing and mathematics, some of

the lowest in the country. This was a marked change from 2016, when progress in reading and writing was above the national average and in mathematics was similar to the national average.

- The school has too few disadvantaged pupils for results of the key stage 2 national tests to be discussed without the risk of individual pupils being identifiable. In some year groups there are no pupils who are, or have been, eligible for free school meals. The school's assessment information and the work in pupils' books show that disadvantaged pupils make better progress in some year groups than others.
- The school has a similarly small number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. In some year groups there are no pupils who are identified as having SEN and/or disabilities. Assessment information and pupils' work show that some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make better progress than others.
- The work in pupils' exercise books shows that most pupils are working broadly within the expected range for their age. The progress that pupils make is variable in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects. In some cases, pupils are making good progress but in others, pupils' progress is too slow because of previous weaknesses in the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of the key stage 2 was similar to the national average in 2017. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was broadly in line with the average for all pupils across the country.
- Pupils read confidently and fluently, at a level appropriate for their age. Pupils enjoy reading and are introduced to high-quality texts through their reading in class. Pupils' comprehension skills are now developing well and they are starting to make better progress.
- Pupils make good progress in phonics as a result of the good teaching they receive. For the last three years, results of the Year 1 phonics screening check have been consistently about the national average. Pupils in the current Year 1 are making similarly good progress.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years leader has strong knowledge and understanding of the provision's strengths and areas for development. She takes decisive and effective action to improve provision where necessary. As a result, the early years are good and improving.
- The school has focused well on developing children's speech and language skills. Leaders have chosen to use a structured programme to assess children's abilities in this area and to help them to 'plug' any gaps. The school's assessment information shows clearly that children are making good progress in developing their language and communication skills.
- Phonics is taught very well in the early years. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They structure their phonics teaching sessions well so that children are taught new information before being given the opportunity to practise and apply what they have learned. As a result, children are making good progress. At this early stage in the

academic year, most Reception children can write simple sentences such as 'I can play' with little or no help.

- Children behave very well in the early years. They learn the school's rules quickly and follow them well. Children know that there are different rules for when they are outside. They are given suitable opportunities to learn to manage risks safely, such as when playing on the large climbing frame.
- Children make good progress in the early years. Most children enter the school with skills and abilities that are broadly typical of their age. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has improved and has been above the national average for the last two years. As a result, children are prepared well for the increasing demands of Year 1.



## School details

Unique reference number	117464
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031505

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paraic McKenna
Headteacher	Catherine Corr
Telephone number	01707 324408
Website	<a href="http://www.ourladys527.herts.sch.uk">www.ourladys527.herts.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@ourladys527.herts.sch.uk">head@ourladys527.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	7–8 November 2012

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about key stage 2 results, pupil premium, sport premium and governors.
- There have been numerous issues affecting staffing over the past year, some of which are ongoing and of a serious nature. Four teachers took periods of planned leave during the last academic year.
- The school meets current floor standards. These are the minimum standards, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' exercise books. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documents including assessment information. They checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff.
- Meetings were held with: the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and senior teacher, a group of subject leaders, a group of governors and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection and with parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors considered 52 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 42 additional free-text comments. There were no responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

## Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Maher	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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