

St Leonard's Church of England Primary Academy

Collinswood Drive, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 0NX

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2017, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 was well below the national average.
- Pupils' progress in key stage 2 is too variable. Pupils with low starting points are not catching up quickly enough.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good, particularly in key stage 2.
- Some teachers do not plan learning which meets the needs of all groups of pupils.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and few of these pupils attain the higher standards in key stage 2.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils.
- Key stage 2 pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting are not developed well. This limits pupils' progress and the quality of their writing.
- Pupils in key stage 2 do not have enough opportunities to write at length and apply their skills in English and the wider curriculum.
- Some assessments of pupils' writing are too generous. Leaders have not checked the accuracy of these assessments carefully enough.
- The school's development plan and pupil premium plan are not sufficiently rigorous.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, ably supported by other leaders, leads the school well. Her strong leadership, unstinting determination and vision have brought about many improvements.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school's work.
- Pupils behave well, and the school is a happy, purposeful environment for learning.
- Children get off to a great start in the early years and achieve well. Attainment in key stage 1 is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school's partnership with parents and carers is strong, and the majority of parents are very positive about the school.
- Governors and trustees support the school well and hold leaders to account.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good by ensuring that:
 - teachers take more account of pupils' previous learning and plan tasks that meet the needs of all groups of pupils, including the most able and low-attaining pupils
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' learning and the quantity and quality of pupils' work.
- Improve outcomes for pupils in key stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, make consistently good progress so that a greater proportion reach the expected standards and more attain the high standards
 - accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils so that the gap between these pupils' achievement and that of other pupils diminishes
 - ensuring that teachers give greater attention to pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting and provide more opportunities for pupils to write at length in English and in other subjects.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that:
 - improvement and pupil premium spending plans include clear, measurable success criteria to enable leaders and governors to evaluate the impact of these plans
 - assessments of pupils' writing are more accurate.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's steely determination, ambition and vision have enabled the school to continue on its journey of improvement. She has tackled underperformance very well. Her strong moral purpose to achieve the best for every pupil shines through her work. Parents appreciate and value the work of the headteacher. As one parent commented: 'I have seen a big change since the headteacher joined the school and I think the school should be celebrating the amazing things it does.'
- The headteacher has energised the staff, who fully support the drive for improvement. Morale at the school is high. The headteacher is ably supported by other senior leaders, who together form a strong team. Effective leadership has led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in key stage 1 and the early years, and in pupils' behaviour.
- Leaders carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching and how well pupils are learning. They keep comprehensive records of the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils. However, leaders acknowledge that some assessments of pupils' writing are not accurate enough.
- Leaders have an honest and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their plans have identified the right priorities and actions to help move the school forward. However, these plans and the pupil premium plan do not have success criteria which are precise enough for leaders to accurately evaluate their success.
- Leaders have responded with vigour to the lower-than-expected standards in pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. They have meticulously analysed the reasons for pupils' weak performance and as a result have adjusted the school's approach to reading and mathematics. The school's new reading strategy is helping to improve pupils' reading skills and responses to a wide variety of texts. Daily calculation practice is increasing pupils' skills, fluency, speed and confidence with number.
- Mathematics and English are led well and these leaders play a key role in driving improvements across the school. Senior leaders are helping other subject leaders to develop a more strategic role and have greater oversight of learning in their respective subjects.
- Leaders use funding well to make sure that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well in both their academic learning and their personal development. Leaders' holistic approach to supporting these pupils is rooted in their very good understanding of the factors that sometimes prevent pupils from learning well. The inclusion leader keeps careful oversight of pupils' learning, evaluating support and interventions to check that they are making a positive difference to pupils' learning.
- Leaders take a similar approach to how they use the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils benefit from the wide range of support for their personal development and attendance provided by the 'well-being team'. This funding has been

used to have a significant impact on pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and self-esteem. Pupils' readiness to learn has increased, as well as their resilience and self-confidence. However, leaders acknowledge that the additional funding has not yet had enough impact on improving these pupils' rates of progress.

- Leaders have created a school community underpinned by the school's Christian ethos and values of 'achieve, believe and care'. These are successfully intertwined with British values and enable pupils to learn about the importance of respect, tolerance and working together as a team.
- Everyone at St Leonard's is valued and their unique qualities celebrated. This is shown wonderfully in the school's attractive display of pupils' work about love and peace: 'We are each unique but together we are a masterpiece.' As a result, positive and harmonious relationships are the norm and there is a tangible sense of belonging. Leaders make sure that pupils have opportunities for reflection in the daily collective worship. Together with pupils' learning about other faiths, this prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have designed an interesting curriculum that is suitably broad and balanced. Pupils enjoy the 'stunning starts' which ignite their interest and the 'fabulous finishes' which celebrate their achievements at the end of a topic. Pupils talked with enthusiasm about how much they are looking forward to their forthcoming and exciting Roman day. They also relish the many extra clubs on offer, including craft and reading.
- The school has developed a comprehensive programme of outdoor learning, including 'forest schools'. The outdoor learning areas provide many rich opportunities for pupils to learn about the world around them and develop their physical skills. Pupils enthuse about these opportunities; as one pupil commented, 'I just love forest school. It's my favourite activity.'
- Leaders use the sports funding very well. Pupils benefit from a very wide range of sporting clubs and activities, such as golf and football. These activities develop pupils' skills and also contribute significantly to their sense of achievement. Pupils have enjoyed considerable success in local competitive events and are rightly proud of their gold sports award. Leaders are reviewing their plans to ensure that improvements to physical education and sport are sustainable.
- Leaders have worked tirelessly to establish good partnerships with parents and help them to become more involved in their children's learning in school. Parents are full of praise for the work of leaders and express high levels of satisfaction.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and where improvements are needed, particularly to pupils' outcomes in key stage 2. They are well informed about pupils' progress and are beginning to ask more searching questions in meetings. They make sure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place and visit the school regularly to check on this aspect of the school's work.
- The governors and the trust hold leaders to account, including through their performance management arrangements. Following the significantly low standards in the 2017 key stage 2 assessments, the trust responded swiftly. Trustees have brokered

additional support to improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress. The support from the teaching and learning leader from another school in the trust has already had a notable impact on the raising of attainment in the current Year 6 cohort.

- Trustees and governors draw upon expertise beyond the school to give them an external, independent evaluation of the school's work, including pupils' learning. As trustees were not satisfied with the accuracy or quality of this in the previous year, new arrangements are now in place.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders place pupils' well-being and safety at the heart of their work. They work tirelessly and sensitively with pupils and their families to provide timely early help and support.
- Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular training and updates. As a result, staff are very knowledgeable about their responsibilities and what to do if they have any concerns. Leaders keep diligent and detailed records of any safeguarding concerns and refer these on, where appropriate, to outside agencies. The school's checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are fully compliant.
- The vast majority of parents agree that their children are happy and feel safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although rapidly improving, the quality of teaching at the school is too variable, particularly in key stage 2. As a result, pupils' progress is uneven and not enough pupils are making the progress they are capable of.
- In some classes, teachers' expectations are not high enough, of either the quantity or the quality of pupils' work. Teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' previous learning. Tasks are not adapted to meet the widely different abilities and needs of pupils, including the most able. In a few classes, teachers do not consistently engage pupils well or ensure that they are listening attentively. When this happens, pupils' attention wanders and they do not learn well.
- However, in classes where teaching is strong, teachers' well-chosen questions deepen and extend pupils' learning and successfully capture their interest. Teachers take more account of pupils' needs and sometimes set a range of tasks for pupils to select from. In these classes, teachers make sure that pupils understand how to approach their tasks so that they can settle quickly to learning.
- In key stage 2, teachers typically ask low-attaining pupils to develop aspects of their writing which are beyond their capabilities. Too little attention is given to developing pupils' basic skills in punctuation, spelling and handwriting. In addition, teachers do not provide enough opportunity for pupils to write at length in English or in other subjects, and their assessments of pupils' writing are, at times, too generous.
- The teaching of mathematics is stronger than it is in English. Teachers are now making

sure that pupils have regular opportunities to practise their number skills and develop their fluency and speed of calculation. They also help pupils to develop their understanding by asking them to explain and justify their answers. Teachers ensure that pupils set their work out well so that their calculations are clear. However, there is not yet sufficient stretch and challenge for the most able pupils. These pupils are not routinely given sufficient opportunity to apply their skills to solve problems and develop their reasoning skills.

- Phonics is taught well, and younger pupils get off to a good start when learning to read. Teachers have enthusiastically embraced the new approach to teaching reading in key stage 2. Teachers select well-chosen texts, pose structured questions and provide helpful 'answer-stems' for pupils to work from. This is helping pupils to read for meaning. During the week of the inspection, pupils enjoyed working together to phrase their predictions about what might happen next in their reading texts.
- Across the school, relationships between staff and pupils are positive and warm. Classrooms are attractive and well organised, and routines are well established. Attractive displays celebrate pupils' achievements, stimulate their interest and support their learning, for example by showing pupils how to set out calculations.
- In a range of different subjects, teachers provide useful word lists to help pupils to extend their vocabulary when writing. This is particularly helpful for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants support these pupils well in class and enable them to be fully included in classroom activities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and speak with pride about their school and personal achievements. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and try their best in lessons. Pupils say that the school is friendly and that pupils are kind to each other. They feel safe in school and are confident in speaking to their teachers if they have any worries. Pupils say that bullying happens only very occasionally and that when any issues arise, teachers deal with these very well.
- Staff demonstrate high levels of care for pupils, and their personal and social needs are well met. The 'well-being team' and outside agencies provide valuable support and guidance for pupils with additional needs. Alongside the school's work to improve pupils' self-esteem, resilience and confidence, this has been pivotal in enabling pupils to be 'ready to learn'.
- Diversity is valued and pupils' individual qualities are celebrated. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their unique qualities by 'looking in the mirror to see the good qualities that other people see'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe online, for example by not responding to any communication from strangers and not sharing personal information. Pupils in the school council help other pupils to learn about keeping safe and healthy,

for example through their posters reminding pupils to wash their hands after using the toilet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders' good work and their strategic approach to the issue has led to significant improvements in pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils behave well in class and respond very promptly to teachers' requests. They move around the school sensibly and calmly, holding doors open for each other and for visitors. Transitions between activities are smooth, with very little wasted time in most lessons. Lunchtimes are relaxed social occasions and pupils enjoy a range of active play in the well-resourced outside areas. Pupils demonstrate good manners and show respect and courtesy to others.
- Pupils who find it difficult to manage their emotions are supported well. They are encouraged to make positive choices and reflect upon their own behaviour. There are good systems to monitor and keep track of any incidents. Records show that there has been a sustained and notable reduction in incidents of poor behaviour and exclusions.
- Although attendance remains below the national average, it is improving. Leaders are doing all that they can to work with families to help pupils to attend school regularly. The school uses part of the pupil premium funding to support the good attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' effective work has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of these pupils who are regularly absent from school. However, leaders are right to continue their close focus on attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In recent years, pupils' progress in key stage 2 has been far too slow. As a result, in 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well below the national average. Very few of the most able pupils attained the higher standards, and disadvantaged pupils' attainment was particularly weak.
- In contrast, pupils in key stage 1 achieved well. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was similar to the national average. All groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, achieved well. Pupils in key stage 1 continue to make stronger progress than pupils in key stage 2.
- However, there are 'green shoots' and an improving picture across the school. Attainment in key stage 2 is rising and pupils are now making better progress. A much higher proportion of pupils in Year 6 are currently working at the expected standards than at the same time last year. Although progress in other year groups is improving, due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching this is not yet consistently good. Some pupils have significant ground to make up to reach the expected standard, especially in writing. Few of the most able pupils are currently working at the higher standard, and these pupils are not making consistently good progress.
- Rates of progress for different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and

those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are uneven across key stage 2, reflecting variations in the quality of teaching. In some year groups, there is a wide gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. The additional funding for these pupils has not yet led to improved attainment and accelerated progress.

- Younger pupils make good progress with their early reading skills, applying their phonic skills appropriately to sound out unknown words. The proportion of pupils who meet the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has risen steadily, although this remains below the national average.
- Older pupils read with fluency and confidence and have positive attitudes to reading. They talk with enthusiasm about their favourite authors and books. Pupils appreciate their attractive library, and many pupils read regularly at home. The school's new approach to reading is helping pupils to read for meaning. However, pupils are not yet transferring this skill to their independent reading.
- Progress in pupils' writing in key stage 2 remains very patchy. Many pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting are weak, and this limits the quality of their writing. Pupils typically repeat basic spelling errors and do not consistently apply punctuation correctly in their sentences. Many pupils do not take enough care with the presentation of their work.
- Key stage 2 pupils' progress in mathematics is stronger than it is in English. The regular number and times-tables challenges are making a good contribution to pupils' speed and fluency of calculation. Pupils develop an appropriate understanding of different methods of calculation, including formal written methods. In mathematics, pupils present and set out their work clearly to help them calculate accurately, for example by 'putting one digit in each box'.
- In key stage 2, in subjects such as history, geography and science, pupils typically complete very little written work and there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in these subjects.
- Pupils across the school achieve well in religious education. They have a secure understanding of Christianity and also learn about customs and beliefs in other religions. Physical education is a strength, and a few individual pupils excel in sport. As a result of the school's good provision for swimming, by the end of Year 5 the vast majority of pupils can swim at least 25 metres.
- Pupils are socially prepared very well for their transfer to secondary school at the end of Year 6. However, their low achievement at the end of key stage 2 means that many lack the skills and knowledge they need to be academically prepared for the challenges ahead in key stage 3.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a happy, successful start to school. Many children enter the early years with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for children of this age. As a result of strong teaching, children make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Reception, an above-average proportion achieve the expected 'good level of development'. This positive start means that children are well prepared to enter Year 1.

- The early years setting is a hive of industry. Well-designed activities harness children's natural enthusiasm for learning. As a result, children are quickly 'hooked' into learning and they sustain attention at activities. Timely responses from adults help to develop children's learning. Adults guide and enrich children's play and language through modelling language and play and through their well-timed questions.
- Children behave well and cooperate well with each other. They are confident, independent learners and enjoy speaking to visitors about their learning. As one child commented, 'Jack Frost has come to visit us today. Look over there!' Relationships are highly positive, and adults attend well to children's welfare needs. The setting is a secure, stimulating and attractive environment for learning.
- The good provision for children's early reading and writing helps them to make good progress with these skills. The indoor spaces are awash with writing and reading prompts and activities to help children to develop these important early skills.
- The early years is well led. The leader uses her skills and good knowledge of early years practice to guide and lead other staff. She carefully tracks children's progress through regular observations, enabling adults to plan children's next learning steps. Parents value the way the school's electronic records show them how well their children are learning. They also appreciate the opportunity to contribute to these 'learning journeys'.
- Partnership with parents is strong and parents are delighted with how well their children are learning in the early years. One parent commented, 'I feel that my child has had a brilliant start to school life.'

School details

Unique reference number	141868
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10040903

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the local governing body	Isabell Button
Headteacher	Marie Burgess
Telephone number	01424 422950
Website	www.stleonards-ce.e-sussex.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@stleonardsceprimaryacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The early years consists of two Reception classes.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- Overall, the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2016, which are the minimum expectations for standards and progress for pupils in Year 6.
- The school joined Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust in April 2015. There are five other schools in this trust.

- The headteacher took up her substantive role as headteacher in February 2015 prior to the school's conversion to an academy.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club which is managed by the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes, sometimes accompanied by the headteacher. Inspectors also made short visits to classes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and other staff.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the chair of governors, three other governors and two representatives from the board of trustees.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at pupils' work in books, and discussed pupils' progress and learning with leaders. They held meetings with pupils from Years 2 to 6 and spoke to pupils in classes and on the playground during lunchtime and breaktime. Inspectors also considered the 57 responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through discussions before school. They also considered the 79 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 48 written comments.
- The views of staff were gathered through discussions with them and 33 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors checked a wide range of records and documentation relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, and the recruitment checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children.
- Inspectors reviewed other school documents, including governors' records of meetings and visits to the school, policies, improvement plans and evaluations of teaching and learning.

Inspection team

Sue Cox, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Claire Prince	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephanie Scutter	Ofsted Inspector

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