

# St Luke's Catholic Academy

Pyenest Road, Harlow, Essex CM19 4LU

## Inspection dates

1–2 May 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- School leaders, including governors, have a clear vision for raising standards. This has ensured that there is a strong commitment across the school for improving pupils' outcomes.
- Rigorous systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress are ensuring that pupils at risk of falling behind are identified quickly and effectively supported to keep up with others.
- Effective leadership in early years ensures that children make good progress from their different starting points. Consequently, they leave Reception as confident learners ready for Year 1.
- Due to strong leadership in mathematics, attainment for current pupils has consistently exceeded national expectations by the end of key stage 1.
- The precise, effective support and care for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities ensures that these pupils make good progress.
- Leaders' precise focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in reading, particularly in key stage 2, has ensured that current pupils are making good progress.
- Pupils achieve well in writing. This is because teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' work. These expectations are reflected in the wide range of high-quality and well-presented writing across the school.
- Pupils are polite and respectful to adults and their peers. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.
- The teaching of reading along with phonics is now a strength in the school. Despite this, there is a lack of opportunity to encourage and promote a love of independent reading.
- Teachers do not always use assessment information precisely enough to sufficiently stretch and challenge the most able pupils.
- Middle leaders, new in post, have clear actions to improve outcomes in their subject areas. However, it is too early to see the full impact of their work.
- Teaching and learning in mathematics is ensuring that current pupils in key stage 2 are making good progress. However, teachers are not yet providing enough regular opportunities to help pupils gain a deeper level of understanding.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - supporting middle leaders to evaluate their work more precisely so that they can contribute more effectively to raising standards and improving pupils' outcomes
  - raising the profile of reading further by providing pupils with more high-quality texts in school and to read at home to engender a love of reading.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that teachers use children's and pupils' progress information precisely enough to move learning on more quickly, so that all pupils, particularly the most able, make the progress of which they are capable
  - ensuring that teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills so that more pupils, particularly in key stage 2, gain a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The executive headteacher, ably supported by two assistant executive headteachers, has ensured that teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to raise standards to improve pupils' outcomes across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. The executive headteacher's strong commitment to staff development and training has meant that the newly established workforce are seeing the fruits of their labour.
- Leaders have sharply focused on key areas that caused pupils to underperform over the previous two years. Leaders' relentless approach to developing teachers' specific skills in the teaching of mathematics and reading has ensured that pupils' outcomes in both subjects are improving and have significantly improved for current pupils particularly in key stage 2.
- Disappointed with outcomes in reading for pupils at the end of Year 6, leaders quite rightly made reading a key priority. Leaders have begun to raise the profile of reading as recognised by the pupils, who commented on the shift to more regular reading opportunities. Thorough analysis of past pupils' outcomes has helped leaders devise appropriate action plans to address the gaps in pupils' understanding. The emphasis on building and extending vocabulary and the precise focus on helping pupils to understand reading comprehension has been pivotal to pupils developing and acquiring specific skills, such as inference, prediction and retrieval.
- As with reading, leaders have ensured that clear actions are in place to develop pupils' mathematical thinking so that more pupils have opportunities to reach expected and higher standards by the time they leave primary school. Mathematics is led particularly well by the assistant executive headteacher. She has provided good-quality training for teachers and additional adults, which has ensured a consistent approach across the school. However, leaders recognise that there is more to do to raise standards further in mathematics.
- It is clear that leaders are deeply committed to ensuring that pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to broaden and develop their knowledge in core areas of the curriculum. For example, as well as pupils in key stage 2 being given the opportunity to have their poems published in 'The Young Writers' book, the trust are hosting the Essex English and mathematics competitions which pupils from St Luke's are entered into.
- Leaders have reviewed their systems for assessing pupils' progress and are now far more rigorous. Along with close monitoring and evaluation of the progress and needs of individual pupils, leaders have ensured that there is a consistent approach in the quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school provides pupils with an inspiring curriculum which covers a range of interests which interlink with many subjects. For example, during the Year 6 topic 'Dragon's Den', pupils learned about Alexander Fleming, they designed their own invention, and prepared a presentation on cyber security to pitch to a group of pupils. Each theme is covered in depth, which allows pupils to build knowledge that can be

sustained over time.

- Through the school's Catholic ethos pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Nurture and mutual respect permeates the school; in lessons between teacher and pupils, and among pupils. Pupils work well together, with partners in lessons to practise discussing and debating their reasoning.
- The personal, social, health and economic curriculum and assemblies focus on fundamental British values and safeguarding activities. Pupils recognise the school's vision and the ethos of family values and 'working together'.
- Leaders ensure the physical education (PE) and sports premium is used effectively. Being a member of the Harlow School's Sports Partnership has given pupils opportunities to take part in a wide range of sporting activities. Staff have access to high-quality training throughout the year. As a result, a high proportion of key stage 2 pupils attend games events, with some success and the number of pupils taking part is increasing year on year.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported very effectively by the special educational needs coordinator. Barriers to pupils' learning are identified quickly. Pupils are closely tracked to ensure that they make good progress over time. The parents that inspectors spoke with and those who responded to Ofsted online free-text service praised the nurture and support they received for their children. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from the different starting points.
- The curriculum supports pupils' knowledge building and develops their vocabulary well. The 'hook with a book' idea launches many of the topics which engage and inspire pupils to write at length. Classic books such as 'Charlotte's Web', 'James and the Giant Peach', 'Mary Poppins' and 'Hansel and Gretel' are just a few that pupils enjoy working with in class. As a result, pupils can use high-level vocabulary and grammar techniques that make their writing interesting and of a good quality.
- Pupils report that they do not get the opportunities to read the high-quality texts out of class. Pupils acknowledge an increase in the focus on reading. However, they felt that the school could do more to promote the 'love of reading' by extending the range, improving the library and moving on from the scheme books quicker.
- Middle leaders work across both trust schools to share best practice and learn from each other's individual expertise. This is helping to build capacity across the school whilst effectively developing the skills and expertise of less experienced teachers. However, senior leaders recognise that there is still more to do to support middle leaders in evaluating their work effectively so that their actions raise outcomes for all pupils.

## **Governance of the school**

- The chair of governors is long-standing and has governor responsibilities across both schools in the academy. He has an accurate view of the school and has a good understanding of the actions that leaders have taken to raise standards. He is ambitious for the school and shares the vision of leaders for raising pupils' outcomes, and he readily acknowledges that there is still more work to do to make the school even better.
- Governors visit the school to review monitoring and pupil progress data with the

executive headteacher and senior leaders. Minutes of governors' meetings show that they provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. They have particularly been involved with recruitment and retention and support leaders in offering a programme of continuous development for staff across the school. In addition, they carry out exit interviews for teachers when they leave. As a result, teaching staff are hugely positive of the support and development needs they receive. One member of staff said, 'I couldn't imagine working anywhere else.'

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders carry out appropriate checks on those appointed to work at the school. Where necessary, risk assessments have been completed and reviewed accordingly. All staff and governors have received the appropriate safeguarding training. Staff and parents agree that pupils are safe.
- Designated leaders for safeguarding ensure that there is rigour in following up any concerns that staff may have. Leaders make sure that support for those children who need it is precise and speedy. Safeguarding is a high priority and staff are continually updated through regular weekly and termly meetings.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Leaders' systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school are rigorous. Teachers are provided with immediate feedback to address any development points. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics is good and consistent across the school.
- The school's creative curriculum supports pupils to develop their skills in both reading and writing. Topics are covered in depth and pupils have opportunities to complete writing for wide range of purposes over a term. For example, in their topic on the Second World War, Year 6 wrote from the perspective of a soldier's life in the trenches, and as an evacuee. They completed a biography of Winston Churchill and wrote non-chronological reports about The Blitz, 'Digging for Victory' and 'Code Breaking'. Links with other subjects are made where possible, such as with science, where pupils investigated the best conditions for keeping bread fresh in the trenches.
- The sharp focus on the teaching of reading has ensured that reading is taught daily with a focus on specific skills. Teachers' good subject knowledge and use of effective questioning enables pupils to think deeper and explore meaning behind words. In Year 1, for example, pupils were asked to give alternatives for the phrase 'a sound plan'. Pupils offered 'ingenious' and 'fantastic'. In Year 4 pupils were asked to predict what would happen in part of a story and justify their answers by using inference from the text. There is much evidence to show that pupils are given opportunities to develop and extend their vocabulary daily through a wide range of texts.
- Although there was a dip in outcomes in phonics in 2017, evidence shows that teachers have raised standards through more regular reading activities and a strong focus on building pupils' vocabulary. As a result, pupils are taught phonics skills effectively and make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have effectively developed their practice so that they

are far more skilled at teaching and supporting pupils in reading. Teachers plan activities to deepen pupils' understanding of inference and comprehension. As a result, current pupils, particularly in key stage 2, are making good progress this year, with more on track to reach expected and beyond at the end of the school year.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported effectively by skilled additional adults who ensure that they make as much progress as they can. Pupils have personalised plans that help them learn at their own pace with specific support and targets. Pupils work well together and make good progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders have put in place a range of activities to prevent pupils from falling behind. The school's chosen approach of small-group, short, focused interventions have been effective in ensuring that children of all abilities catch up rapidly. 'Same-day' interventions allow quick fixes to support pupils' immediate understanding.
- Teachers have made great strides in developing pupils' mathematical fluency. For example, leaders have introduced regular recall activities such as 'speedy mathematics'. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident at using pictorial representation to help them understand difficult concepts.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of different calculation methods and the ability to use them to solve word problems. Teachers are supporting pupils well to develop their thinking skills further so that they can attempt more complex problem-solving tasks with greater conviction. Extra mathematics support is provided for pupils in Years 5 and 6 to ensure that they are ready for the next stage in their education. However, leaders acknowledge that teachers need to give pupils more practice in developing their skills at a deeper level so that a greater number of pupils reach the higher standards at the end of the year, particularly in key stage 2.
- Most of the pupils that inspectors heard read were able to talk about the importance of fluency and accuracy in reading to ensure enjoyment. Those who struggled used the strategies they had been taught, such as to sound out words that they did not know. Pupils told inspectors that they wanted to become free readers and spoke enthusiastically about the books and authors they are studying in class or were reading at home. However, some older readers found that the scheme books were uninspiring and did not motivate them to want to read.
- Precise monitoring of interventions ensure that pupils do not fall behind. However, leaders agree that teachers need to use the information they already know about pupils to move them on quicker at the start of the lesson so that pupils, particularly the most able, make the good and better progress of which they are capable.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Assemblies ensure that the school's values are revisited and linked to their learning. The school's reward system ensures that pupils are recognised for practising the school's Catholic values and becoming good citizens.

- Staff know their pupils well and provide effective extra support, particularly for those who are vulnerable. Parents and grandparents commented on how staff are approachable and always able to deal effectively with any concerns. They attribute the 'speedy' progress that their children make in reading to the open partnership between school and home.
- The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Pupils say that they feel safe and behave sensibly in and around the school. Parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and those spoken to said that their children are happy at school, safe and are well looked after.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that the well-being of pupils is a high priority. Pupils said on Ofsted's online survey that teachers listen to them and help them in lessons. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school and learning.
- Parents welcome the school's positive pastoral care. All parents spoken with say that their children are happy. One parent commented that their child enjoyed school so much when she started at St Luke's that she cried because 'She didn't want to go home.'

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, are respectful, polite and engage well in lessons.
- Pupils interact sensibly with each other and behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtime is good. Pupils are polite and well-mannered and behave respectfully towards their peers and adults.
- Lunchtime is an orderly affair with pupils behaving well. Pupils say that there is no bullying at school and behaviour logs show that behaviour is good.
- Overall, pupils' attendance has been consistently above the national averages. Leaders track attendance closely and can provide detailed case studies for pupil absences.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Over time, key stage 1 pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. In both 2016 and 2017, pupils' attainment exceeded national averages for both the expected and greater depth standards in all three subjects. These results represent good progress from pupils' various starting points.
- Historically, key stage 2 pupils have not made the progress of which they are capable. However, the school's assessment information, aligned with pupils' work in their books, shows that this is rapidly improving, and progress is on track to be better than in previous years.
- Outcomes in mathematics exceeded the national average in key stage 1 in 2016 and 2017 at both the expected and greater depth standards. Pupils in key stage 2 achieved broadly in line with the national average but too few pupils made sufficient progress to achieve at the higher standard. The school's latest assessment information and pupils' work show that progress and attainment for current pupils are improving, with more on

track to make good and better progress by the end of key stage 2.

- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check significantly exceeded national averages in 2016 but dipped in 2017 and was below the national average. However, end of key stage tests in reading have been above national expectations at the end of key stage 1 for the last two years.
- Pupils' progress and attainment for reading has been below average, for Year 6, at the end of 2016 and 2017. Leaders have accurately identified and addressed previous weaknesses and current pupils are now on track to make good progress and more pupils are expected to attain in line at both the expected and higher standards of attainment.
- Pupils' work shows that pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good and better progress from their starting points. Leaders, teachers and additional adults ensure that these pupils receive precise support so that they make as much progress as they can.
- The quality of pupils' writing is strong across the school. Pupils write for many different purposes and this is seen throughout the school on display and in pupils' work. The writing is of a good level and presentation is high quality. A number of pupils recently had their work published in the 'Young Writers' poetry book. The school's progress information and pupils' work across the school show that a high proportion of current pupils are working at the expected and higher standards in writing.
- Pupils' attainment in writing was in line or above national averages across the school at the end of 2017. Pupils' work indicates that outcomes in writing will improve further by the end of this academic year.
- Pupils' topic work is of a good quality. They take pride in their presentation and are taught a range of interesting and inspiring subjects through the creative curriculum. There is a range of evidence that demonstrates that pupils achieve well in a range of subjects.
- The most able pupils generally achieve well and reached the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at key stages 1. However, this is not the case in key stage 2. Leaders acknowledge that at times these pupils could be moved on quicker so that even more pupils make the progress needed to reach the higher standards of attainment.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The leadership of the early years is strong. The teaching team work well together to ensure that children develop the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to prepare them well for learning in Year 1. As a result, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception is consistently in line with national averages.
- Despite high outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Reception, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of 2017 was only in line with national expectations. Leaders identified that speaking and listening was a barrier for some children. The precise focus on developing children's confidence through speaking and listening activities is ensuring that children are



making good progress in this area.

- The new pre-school is vibrant and inspiring. The focus on key skills such as reading and writing is evidenced throughout the classroom environment. The teacher closely monitors the stages of children's development. Visual displays of where children are in their development, for example in using a pencil, helps all adults working with the children know the next steps for each child.
- Children make good progress in applying their phonics skills in writing. Children are encouraged to use capital letters, full stops and write on the line from the start. Children attempt writing in full sentences independently using their knowledge of phonics.
- Children enjoy reading and the most able can read fluently and with understanding.
- Children were observed happy and chatty, actively engaged in activities because they interest them. For example, one child spoke enthusiastically about the starship he had built and its connection to Star Wars, while several others wanted to talk and write about the mini-beasts they had found on their walk. Children choose to write during independent activities and the most able children can write confidently at length.
- Teachers skilfully use questioning to support and assess children's understanding. Adults routinely assess children's learning during lessons and over time. Parents spoke positively about the school's electronic systems for sharing information, enabling them to contribute to their child's learning journey.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant risk assessments are in place and that all staff have undertaken the necessary training to ensure children's statutory welfare, safeguarding and safety needs are met fully.
- The proportion of children who reached expected attainment and higher in reading, writing and mathematics exceeded national standards at the end of Reception in 2017. Transition arrangements are strong and high expectations are maintained through into Year 1 and the end of key stage 1. This is evidenced in progress and attainment information for pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 over the last two years. However, in some instances, the most able children are not always moved on as quickly as they could be to make the progress of which they are capable.

## School details

Unique reference number	139577
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10046107

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	George Reynolds
Executive headteacher	Ian Kendal
Telephone number	01279 423499
Website	<a href="http://www.st-lukesrc.essex.sch.uk">www.st-lukesrc.essex.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@st-lukesrc.essex.sch.uk">admin@st-lukesrc.essex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	4–5 March 2015

## Information about this school

- St Luke's Catholic Academy, which converted to become an academy on 1 September 2013, is part of the 'Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Multi Academy Trust' and is sponsored by St Alban's Catholic Academy in Harlow.
- The new executive headteacher took up post in 2017 and also undertakes this role at its partner school.
- The executive headteacher is supported by two assistant executive headteachers at St Luke's Catholic Primary School.
- In January 2018 the school introduced a pre-school for 3- to 4-year-olds.
- Children in the Reception class attend full-time.
- St Luke's is smaller than the average primary school.
- Pupils come from several different minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.

- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning across all year groups.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher, the chair of governors and school staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work, information on pupils' attainment and progress, curriculum planning, records of behaviour and safety. They also scrutinised the monitoring of teaching and the management of teachers' performance, minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documents, including mandatory checks made on the recruitment of new staff, and the school's website.
- Discussions were held with pupils from the school council and informal conversations took place during lesson times.
- The inspection team listened to pupils from across the school read and talked to them about the books they enjoy.
- The inspector took account of seven responses to the online parental questionnaire, Parent View, and seven free-text responses. In addition, inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start and end of the school day. The inspection team also took into consideration 26 responses from Ofsted's online survey for pupils and 11 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

## Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Russell Ayling

Ofsted Inspector

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