

Our Lady Catholic Primary School

Old Hale Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 1XT

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, leaders, including governors, have not ensured that teachers use pupil assessment information well enough to plan activities that enable some pupils to make sufficient progress from their differing starting points.
- Leaders do not provide parents and carers with clear information about the quality of education that the school provides.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across the school. There are marked differences in the quality of education in different year groups.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not have high enough expectations of pupils. As a result, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities do not make the progress they are capable of.
- The curriculum is not broad and balanced enabling pupils to study a breadth of subjects.
- Teaching and learning in early years do not engage children sufficiently well to enable them to make rapid progress. Children are not well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Leaders and staff do not promote reading for enjoyment well. Pupils do not read texts from a wide enough range of writing styles.
- The teaching of writing does not enable pupils to write extensively with precision and attention to the needs of different audiences, purposes and text types.
- Teachers do not provide feedback in line with the school assessment policy. Teacher guidance is not precise enough to ensure that pupils make rapid progress in many areas of the curriculum.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and leadership team, including governors, have secured improvements in a short period of time.
- Pupils behave well. They are kind and courteous.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strong because the school promotes it well.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - monitoring the accuracy of assessment information and using it to review and evaluate the progress of pupils effectively
 - monitoring the quality of teaching and learning effectively to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress
 - monitoring and reviewing the quality of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - ensuring the development of a broad and balanced curriculum
 - ensuring that the trust, governors and leaders communicate to parents effectively and provide them with clarity about the quality of education provided at the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that accurate assessment information is used to inform planning so that activities and tasks meet the needs of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that pupils receive clear feedback so that they know how well they are doing
 - ensuring that good teaching of writing improves the progress that pupils make
 - developing pupils' love of reading through regular access to a broad range of genres
 - ensuring that the curriculum is extended to include a broader range of subjects and that they are taught well.
- Improve the leadership and teaching in early years by:
 - ensuring that the indoor and outdoor areas provide children with stimulating and engaging activities and tasks that develop their early reading, writing and mathematics skills
 - checking and reviewing the quality of provision so that children make rapid progress and are well prepared for learning in Year 1
 - ensuring that all staff have high expectations of what children can achieve
 - ensuring that the transition for children from early years to Year 1 is effective.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher and leadership team have an accurate understanding of standards at the school. They are ambitious for the future success of the school and have secured improvements in a short space of time.
- The senior leadership team has drawn on the support of the local authority to secure accurate assessment information for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. However, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are not yet good.
- The school has experienced severe turbulence in staffing during the past academic year. This has adversely affected and limited leaders' work in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Even so, staff feel well supported by the headteacher and leadership team.
- The wider curriculum is not sufficiently developed to provide pupils with a broad and balanced study of a range of subjects such as music, science and art.
- Leaders of English and mathematics are highly committed to their roles. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their respective subjects. However, due to staff turnover during the past academic year, their impact on improving standards is not yet evident in many areas. The leadership of writing is not effective as it has not led to the improvement of pupils' writing skills at key stage 2.
- Leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved considerably since the new headteacher commissioned the local authority to conduct an external review in 2017. However, leaders have not yet fully embedded changes to the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The school's use of funding does not currently have the impact it should have.
- Although most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are positive about the quality of education at the school, a minority of parents are in opposition. Communications between the trust, school leaders and governors and parents have not provided sufficient information or clarity to alleviate the concerns of this minority of parents.
- Leaders respond well to external support. In light of the instability in staffing, leaders have drawn on both their own expertise and that of external specialist advisers to improve leadership and raise standards in all key stages. They have already been successful in improving standards in mathematics at key stage 2 and phonics in Year 1 and Year 2. However, the impact of this support is not yet evident in many areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders have used the additional sports funding very effectively to provide specialist sports teaching to all pupils within the curriculum. Leaders ensure that all pupils including pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have equal access to a range of sports. All pupils have experience of competing in a breadth of sports. The approach to sports provision is highly inclusive and makes clear links with what pupils learn about in food technology.
- Leaders review the impact of pupil premium funding to ensure that each pupil's needs

are met through personalised provision. Regular monitoring of the progress of disadvantaged pupils has enabled leaders to adapt and review use of the funding effectively.

- Leaders promote pupils' social, cultural, moral and spiritual development well. Pupils have a breadth of opportunities to explore the society they live in through extra-curricular trips, elections for a range of school councils and fundraising for a school in Uganda.

Governance of the school

- Governors are very supportive of the school. After a sustained period of instability, they have a clear and accurate understanding of how the school needs to improve.
- The headteacher commissioned the local authority to conduct an external review of governance in 2017. The school acted swiftly on the recommendations and governors are now posing challenging questions about the effectiveness of the school.
- Governors are ambitious for the school but they are not communicating their vision and ethos well enough to parents.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding leaders are highly vigilant and act swiftly and appropriately to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Having identified issues with safeguarding, the headteacher commissioned an external safeguarding review conducted by the local authority which found safeguarding practices to be inadequate in 2016. However, within the space of three months, safeguarding leads addressed all of the issues identified by the review. A second review in 2017 by the local authority deemed safeguarding arrangements and procedures at the school to be effective.
- Staff are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Training for all staff and governors is up to date and reviewed frequently.
- Pupils are taught how to keep safe when online and why it is important to do so. Pupils state that bullying happens occasionally but that staff act swiftly to resolve any issues. Pupils told inspectors that they felt safe in school and that staff looked after them both physically and emotionally.
- Checks on adults who work at the school are robust and reviewed frequently both by safeguarding leads and the local authority.
- Safeguarding leads are tenacious in ensuring that pupils who are at risk are provided with effective and timely support. They work effectively with external agencies ensuring that pupils receive the care and support they require.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not consistently use assessment information about pupils to inform the planning and delivery of teaching. As a result, the most able pupils do not complete

tasks and activities that challenge them and the pupils with lower prior attainment do not receive sufficient support to enable them to access the tasks. Pupils do not make the progress they are capable of in many areas of the curriculum.

- Teachers do not plan sequences of lessons effectively to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers do not build on links between lessons to stimulate pupils' curiosity and understanding.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not provide consistently effective support to pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Consequently, some pupils cannot access the lessons effectively.
- Teachers do not consistently implement the school's feedback policy. Pupils do not receive sufficient guidance in some areas of the curriculum to help them make rapid progress.
- The teaching of writing is not consistently strong across subjects. Pupils do not know to apply their grammar knowledge to their writing. Pupils are not guided to write extensively and to consider their language choices dependent on the audience, text type and purpose of their writing. Teachers do not evaluate pupils' writing in areas of the curriculum such as science, religious studies and history other than English.
- The teaching of some subjects such as science does not develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding very effectively. Pupils do not write extensively about their understanding. Pupils do not regularly develop hypotheses or evaluations about scientific concepts.
- Pupils do not read regularly for pleasure. Pupils do not read a range of genres with which to develop understanding of how writers use language to convey ideas, characters and settings.
- The teaching of mathematics at key stage 2 has improved. The teaching of mathematical reasoning has enabled pupils to consider different approaches to solve mathematical problems. As a result, pupils at key stage 2 are making better progress in mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics has improved markedly. Leaders and the local authority specialist adviser have reviewed training and support for staff alongside strengthening the monitoring of pupils' progress. Teaching assistants and teachers use the same programme which ensures that children in Reception can transfer successfully to phonics study in Year 1. Pupils currently make good progress in phonics in both Year 1 and Year 2.
- The teaching of PE is a strength of the school. It is highly inclusive enabling all pupils to gain knowledge, skills and understanding of an impressive range of sports such as boccia, rapid-fire cricket and gymnastics. Pupils have regular opportunities to enter school, local and regional competitions. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoyed PE. An inspector observed Year 6 pupils honing their relay running and teamwork skills very effectively.
- Through specialist Spanish teaching, pupils develop a broad vocabulary and a strong ability to structure a range of sentences in Spanish.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel well supported by staff who ensure that they are safe and well cared for. Despite the turbulence created by changes in staffing, pupils' emotional well-being has been supported through access to a wide range of clubs, particularly sports clubs. Pupils interact with each other positively.
- Pupils are kind, courteous and welcoming to visitors, staff and other pupils. They support each other's learning with care and thoughtfulness.
- Pupils like their school. They are proud of their work and eager to show it to visitors and each other. Pupils in a Year 2 class showed the inspector their writing about superheroes with pride.
- Pupils have a strong voice in the school. Through engaging with the democratic process of campaigning and elections, pupils are able to express their opinions. They also engage with how the school is managed through the school council and the eco council.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning. They enjoy their lessons and are eager to do well. The inspector observed pupils learning geography in Year 5 eager to collate and share information about eastern European countries.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave very well both within the classroom and around the school. Pupils move around at breaktime with care and consideration. Pupils told inspectors that the school was a friendly school. Consequently, pupils learn in a harmonious, orderly learning environment.
- There are almost no exclusions as the school's positive behaviour system is effective in alleviating and resolving pupils' misbehaviour.
- Pupils' attendance, including the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, is above the national average. The attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is slightly below that of other pupils but largely due to medical appointments. Governors and leaders regularly monitor the attendance of these pupils when evaluating their achievements.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Leaders and teachers have reviewed the accuracy of assessment information for all year groups and adjusted some overgenerous judgements. The above-average progress that Year 6 pupils achieved in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016, therefore, was not replicated in 2017. However, Year 6 pupils' attainment and progress improved in 2018.

- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils at key stage 2, do not make sufficient progress and do not attain as well as they should in writing. They do not write extensively enough and do not craft their writing skilfully to suit the audience and purpose of the text they are writing.
- Pupils in both key stages do not make strong progress in the wider curriculum subjects such as science and history. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils do not develop strong knowledge, skills and understanding in these subject areas alongside weak development of writing.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils at key stage 1, achieved above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017. Additionally, the proportion of pupils who achieved 'greater depth' was well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017.
- In the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard was below the national average. Currently, pupils are on track to exceed significantly the national standard. Strong, highly effective support from the local authority specialist adviser has ensured that the teaching, learning and assessment of phonics has improved.
- Leaders' implementation of reforms in teaching is enabling some pupils to make better progress across the curriculum. However, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not make the rapid progress that they are capable of. Assessment information is now reviewed more carefully to identify personalised support but the quality of support is inconsistent.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children begin Reception with skills and knowledge that are in line with those typical for their age. However, children do not make rapid progress which prepares them well for study in Year 1.
- Tasks and activities are not structured well enough to support children's early reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- Children flit between activities and do not maintain their interest or attention sufficiently to develop their knowledge and skills. Adults do not have high enough expectations of what children can achieve.
- Parents are involved in their children's learning. They can see their children's learning journals which document the progress they have made in a range of skills and areas of learning.
- Children develop strong social skills through interaction with adults and other children. They are welcoming, kind and polite.
- Staff review assessment information to ensure its accuracy.

School details

Unique reference number	138322
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10052041

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	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Neil Adams
Headteacher	Ciara Nicholson
Telephone number	01462 622555
Website	www.ourladys.herts.sch.uk/
Email address	head@ourladys.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school converted to academy status in 2012 when it joined the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust. Governance is managed by a local governing board.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium funding is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage with small numbers of pupils from a range of different ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of education, health and care plans is below the national average.

- In 2017, the school met the government's published floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons, many jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to lessons and looked at pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils from various year groups. Discussions with school staff, including senior leaders, middle leaders and five governors, were held. Additional telephone discussions with the local authority school support service and the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust were held.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documents including the school's self-evaluation, information on pupils' outcomes and records relating to monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, and behaviour and safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 118 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, alongside 15 letters and emails from parents.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shân Oswald	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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