

St Leonard's CofE (VA) First School

Ipstones, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST10 2LY

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2019

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not made enough improvements to the quality of teaching or pupils' achievement. This is because leaders' checks on these aspects of the school's work have not been accurate. As a result, their view of how well the school is doing in these areas is too positive. Sometimes, too many areas for improvement are tackled at once.
- Although pupils are safe, some staff's understanding of safeguarding is not as up to date as it needs to be. Some staff are not clear about some of the procedures to follow.
- Governors' checks on safeguarding have not identified these shortcomings. Therefore, leaders have not provided specific training to improve staff understanding. The school has not fully implemented the government's 'Prevent' duty.
- Children do not achieve as well as they should in the early years. Teachers are not taking full account of the children's previous achievements. Teaching does not challenge children because staff expectations are not high enough. Also, independent activities are limited in quality and challenge.
- The teaching of reading and writing does not ensure that pupils achieve the standards they should. Pupils have limited opportunities to write, particularly in different subject areas.
- The teaching of phonics requires improvement. Teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve in phonics are not high enough. Pupils also have limited opportunities to apply their understanding of phonics to help their reading and writing.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well. They are confident and courteous. Pupils enjoy coming to school; the range of activities offered captures their interest.
- The school promotes healthy lifestyles and physical activity very well. Pupils understand the importance of eating healthily, and they enthusiastically take part in physical activities.
- The staff are very caring. As a result, pupils are very happy at the school and feel safe. Parents value this aspect of the school's work highly.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average and very few pupils are frequently absent. Pupils come to school on time.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all staff have an up-to-date understanding of safeguarding issues, and are clear about procedures for reporting concerns
 - improving the monitoring of the school's safeguarding practices by governors, including regularly checking staff understanding and the full implementation of the government's 'Prevent' duty
 - improving the accuracy of leaders' and governors' checks on the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes
 - leaders developing higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that leaders focus on the most important areas to tackle in their work to improve the school.
- Strengthen the teaching of reading and writing so that pupils make faster progress in these areas by:
 - providing pupils with a broader and more challenging range of books to read
 - teaching a full range of reading skills to help pupils fully understand and enjoy what they read
 - providing better and more frequent opportunities to write in different subjects of the curriculum.
- Improve the teaching of phonics by:
 - having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - moving pupils straight on when they grasp the letter and sound correspondence, to learn more difficult examples
 - providing better opportunities for pupils to apply their phonics knowledge when reading and writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early years so that children reach higher standards by:
 - teachers raising their expectations of what children can achieve and taking greater account of what children already know when planning lessons and activities
 - ensuring that opportunities for children to learn independently are of a higher quality and are more challenging
 - improving the teaching of literacy and providing better quality tasks and experiences, with a literacy focus, in both the outside and indoor classroom areas.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has a strong desire to get the best for pupils. Although the headteacher has created a warm and caring school, and improved the standard of pupils' behaviour, teaching and the outcomes that pupils achieve are not good.
- Leaders think that the school's teaching and the outcomes that pupils achieve are better than they are. This is because, although frequent, the checks on these areas are not accurate. As a result, the plans that leaders make to improve the school do not always focus on the right things to improve.
- Leaders have not resolved a number of concerns identified at the last inspection. This is because, at times, leaders have tackled too many issues at once. This has hampered the improvement of teaching.
- The headteacher has built a team of leaders who share her commitment. With the headteacher, they have made changes, but some, particularly those related to improving the teaching of English, are not fully in place. This is partly why the teaching of reading and writing remains a weakness. Both leaders are fairly new to their roles and so are at an early stage of developing teaching. Improvements made to the teaching of mathematics are starting to show and pupils' progress in this subject is improving.
- Leaders do not show enough ambition for the standards that pupils can achieve in their work. Leaders have not ensured that teaching takes enough account of pupils' starting points. As a result, lessons and the work set often do not provide the right level of challenge to make sure pupils reach the standards they are capable of.
- The headteacher is supported by a committed team of staff who share her desire for the school's success. Relationships among the team are strong and productive.
- The headteacher has recently put in place new practices for improving pupils' behaviour. This has been successful and pupils' behaviour has therefore improved since the last inspection.
- The headteacher has promoted a focus on encouraging pupils to become physically active. Healthy living is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils enjoy eating fruit each morning, know how important it is to eat healthily and take part in lots of physical activities. The school's plans for spending the physical education (PE) and sport premium allocated to primary schools have been successfully implemented.
- The headteacher has built positive relationships with parents. They hold the school in high esteem and value its work. Parents find the headteacher approachable, and describe her as 'warm and welcoming'.
- Leaders have developed a three-year curriculum programme. This is enthusiastically taught through imaginative topics that interest pupils. They enjoy making pretend fossils out of clay and asking questions about the life of a historic fossil hunter. Learning about the Stone Age, they carefully make pots and are excited to collect sticks to build a Stone Age camp. The curriculum also makes full use of the school's grounds and neighbourhood. Parents and pupils alike speak highly of this. A number of

after-school clubs, popular with pupils, are held, for example a science and technology club and a sports club run by a local football team. These activities provide good opportunities for developing pupils' interests as well as their social skills and personal development.

- Additional funding is used well to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that they receive the right support and are involved in school life.
- The local authority has recognised that the school is in need of support. It has provided a number of advisers to develop the teaching of English and mathematics and this has brought about some improvements. It recognises that the further embedding of new strategies is necessary. The diocese adviser has provided help to improve leadership and management at the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors make regular checks on the school's work. However, their understanding of the school's performance is not precise enough. Consequently, their judgements about some aspects of the school's work, particularly safeguarding, teaching and the achievement of pupils, are not accurate. However, they make regular visits to the school and 'link governors' review the work in specific areas.
- Governors have good systems in place to manage the school's financial resources and carefully review them. Their oversight of how the school spends the PE and sports premium funding for primary schools is a strength.
- Governors share the headteacher's commitment to the school and work in partnership with her to achieve her aims.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Although pupils are safe, the safeguarding knowledge of some staff is not up to date, particularly that relating to recent developments in safeguarding. Some staff were unsure of reporting procedures and said they would need to check what to do when reporting concerns.
- Governors do not monitor the school's safeguarding practice well. They have not identified that staff lack knowledge of the necessary range of safeguarding matters nor have they asked leaders to fill these gaps through training. Governors have not fully implemented the government's 'Prevent' duty or considered how it should be implemented within the school's community.
- When concerns arise, the designated leads for safeguarding are quick to work with external agencies to support pupils and their families. The headteacher has provided some 'early help' support for a number of families.
- The school environment is well maintained and safe. The site is very secure and appropriate risk assessments are made to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations are not high enough given that pupils' starting points are either typical, or above that which is typical, for their age. As pupils' attainment is often above average, teachers think that pupils are making faster progress than they actually are. Work in books often shows that pupils can achieve more and that the level of challenge set by teachers is not high enough.
- Some of the tasks that pupils are set can get in the way of their learning. Tasks that are not well chosen can take pupils time to complete when they would sometimes be able to move on straight away to practise their skills and deepen the knowledge they need to make good progress.
- The teaching of writing is not strong enough. Pupils are not expected to write as much as they can and so do not develop their ideas fully or practise their writing skills effectively. Pupils have limited opportunities to develop their writing skills in the different subject areas. In some tasks, expectations of the quality of writing are not high enough and some of the work produced is of a much lower quality than it should be.
- When reading, pupils do not read enough high-quality or demanding books. Some pupils enjoy reading, but others are less excited by it and find the texts they read less interesting. The teaching of reading concentrates mostly on developing the skills of retrieving information rather than the wider range of skills to help them fully enjoy and understand what they are reading.
- The teaching of phonics also has weaknesses and remains a concern, as at the last inspection. Expectations of the standards that pupils need to reach are often not high enough, particularly given their starting points. Progress can, at times, be too slow. The opportunities that pupils are given to practise and apply their phonics skills in reading and writing are not of a good quality.
- Some staff questioning does not make pupils think hard enough or deepen their understanding. It does not help staff keep a careful check on the progress that pupils are making.
- The teaching in mathematics is becoming stronger. Pupils enjoy developing their mental arithmetic skills through, for example, eagerly completing the 'fantastic four'. Pupils are becoming fluent in their recall of number facts, and their understanding is developed through opportunities for reasoning and problem-solving. Pupils make good use of concrete apparatus to help them understand division, and they use pictures for subtraction.
- Handwriting has improved through frequent practice and teachers having higher expectations in this area. As a result, most pupils have developed a neat joined-up style of handwriting by the time they are in Year 2.
- Stronger teaching features good subject knowledge and enthusiastic delivery. This clearly interests pupils and involves them well in learning. On occasions when teaching is more effective, lessons are taught in an imaginative manner and pupils talk with excitement about learning in the outdoors, particularly on 'Welly Wednesdays'. Parents also like this approach to teaching.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good
- Pupils are confident. They are proud to attend the school. They have good social skills and interact well with others. Pupils like the way the school provides a range of responsibilities, such as being an 'anti-bullying ambassador', and they take these roles seriously.
- The school's very caring atmosphere, which is well promoted by all staff, plays an important role in why pupils feel so safe. Pupils say with great confidence that staff will support them if they are having problems. The family nature of the school means that no-one is overlooked, and the level of care given by staff is appreciatively spoken about by parents. Typical comments were that St Leonard's is 'a happy school' and that 'you know your child is looked after here'.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare. Behaviour records also indicate this. Pupils know they can report concerns to staff and action will be taken.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of e-safety. They know how to use the internet safely and describe lessons about this topic. Pupils are very aware of the need to report to an adult any concerns they might have when online.
- Pupils' spiritual and moral development is a focus of the school. Pupils talk about their assemblies and have a strong sense of right and wrong. Pupils have a growing knowledge of fundamental British values and can talk about how these are promoted by the school.
- Pupils have a limited understanding of cultures in modern Britain which are different to their own. They also have a limited knowledge of faiths other than Christianity. The headteacher recognises this, and plans to promote other faiths are at an early stage.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well throughout the school day. They understand the school's rules and underpinning values. In lessons, they listen carefully and work sensibly with one another. At playtimes, they also interact well with one another and in a kind fashion. During 'wet lunchtimes', they sensibly enjoy a range of activities.
- Pupils attend well and rates of attendance are above the national average for all groups of pupils. Very few pupils are frequently absent. The headteacher has developed effective strategies for improving attendance. Pupils are punctual and parents say that staff challenge any latecomers, encouraging these pupils to attend on time.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils in the 2018 Year 2 national assessments reached average or just above average standards. Pupils did less well in reading and writing than in previous years in terms of the proportions reaching the expected standard, but attainment rose in mathematics, reflecting improved teaching. A scrutiny of the current pupils' work indicates that this pattern of outcomes is likely to continue in 2019. Given the above-average starting points in reading, writing and mathematics for these cohorts at the start of Year 1, this indicates that pupils are not making good progress.
- In the Year 1 2018 phonics screening check, the proportions achieving the expected standard continue to be close to the national average. Observations of pupils' phonics skills during the inspection point to this pattern continuing this year. Given pupils' literacy skills at the start of their time in Year 1, this indicates that pupils are not making good progress.
- By the end of Year 4 in 2018, the school's own assessments showed that pupils continued to reach average levels of attainment for their age, particularly in reading and mathematics. This again does not represent good progress from their Year 3 starting points. Attainment was higher and progress faster in mathematics. Inspection evidence from looking at pupils' work shows that this year's Year 4 cohort are on track to make the same steady, but not good, progress.
- The most able pupils' achievement is mixed. They make faster progress in mathematics but achieve less well in writing.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children's starting points in the Reception Year are at least typical for their age. Children do not make good progress in the Reception Year and so outcomes at the end of the early years require improvement. Over time, the proportions reaching a good level of development or exceeding the early learning goals are just above the national average, reflecting a similar profile to children's starting points.
- Children make most progress in reading and mathematics, but much slower progress in writing. Children's books also show that their attainment in writing is well below the standards they reach in reading and mathematics. The indoor and outdoor classrooms have a limited range of opportunities to capture children's interest in writing or to allow them to practise their writing skills. The emphasis on early numeracy is bearing fruit, and, as a result, children achieve better in this area.
- Children make steady progress in learning phonics. However, they are not working at the standard they should be because teachers' expectations are not high enough and children are not moved on to the new letter and sound correspondences. Teaching also requires improvement. There is a lack of challenge and sometimes children are taught or set tasks that they can already do. For example, in mathematics, children were seen counting from one to 20, yet assessment evidence shows that the knowledge of mathematics of a number of children was considerably beyond that. Although assessment is frequent, it is not used well to ensure that pupils are challenged to work at the standards they are capable of. Assessment information is also not well used to

support the children's move to Year 1.

- There is a limited range of opportunities for children to work independently. When these tasks are available, they are often not as challenging as they should be. Learning is heavily directed by staff and sometimes too much help is given, rather than letting children have a go for themselves. Sometimes the staff's questioning is limited and opportunities are missed for developing children's understanding.
- Leadership and management of the early years requires improvement. It has not secured good teaching. However, since the last inspection, the headteacher has improved the outdoor classroom. In this area, children's physical development is well promoted.
- Staff provide the children with a good level of care. Staff show a high level of warmth and provide gentle guidance throughout the day to ensure that children are safe and happy. The children themselves behave well and form good relationships with one another. They act with much kindness. As a result, the Reception Year is a happy place for the children.
- Teachers have formed good relationships with parents, who are encouraged to contribute to assessments of their children's progress. The headteacher works closely with parents and the local playgroup to ensure that children settle well into Reception.

School details

Unique reference number	124381
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10058470

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Kelly Stanesby
Telephone number	01538266292
Website	www.st-leonards-ipstones.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-leonards-ipstones.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 September 2016

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized school.
- The chair of governors resigned from her role just before the inspection.
- All pupils are from White backgrounds. No pupils speak English as an additional language.
- There were no disadvantaged pupils attending the school at the time of the inspection, and very small numbers in previous years.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well below the national average. There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- Children in the early years class attend full time. In the mornings, most of the Reception Year is taught in a separate class, with a second class having a mixture of Year 1 and Reception children. In the afternoons, all Reception Year children and Year 1 pupils are taught in one class. There is another class in which pupils from Years 2, 3

and 4 are taught together.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes to observe pupils' learning and behaviour. He saw nine parts of lessons, a number of which with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work in their books and on display around the school to establish the current quality of their progress over time in English and mathematics and in a range of subjects.
- The inspector heard some pupils read and met with a group of pupils to find out their views on the school and learning. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the English and mathematics leader. The inspector had two telephone conversations, one with a local authority representative and another with a representative from the diocese. He also met with five governors and reviewed the minutes of the governing body's work.
- The inspector considered the 22 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, which included five free-text responses. The inspector also spoke to parents at the start of the school day.
- Various documents were scrutinised, including the school's development plan, self-evaluation statement, advisers' notes and leaders' monitoring records. Also considered were assessment information and behaviour, safeguarding and attendance documents.

Inspection team

Jonathan Moore, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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