

St Luke's School

Crouch Hall Lane, Redbourn, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 7ET

Inspection dates

15 to 16 May 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although the quality of education is improving, there are inconsistencies in leadership and management and in the quality of teaching and learning which result in provision not yet being good.
- Leadership roles and responsibilities are not clear. Although this is partly due to leadership roles being under review, senior leaders are currently unable to hold all staff to account for their contribution to school improvement.
- Some middle and senior leaders are relatively new to their roles and have not had time to impact fully on improving the school's provision. They have not all had appropriate training to ensure they are effective in their roles.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure activities are well suited to pupils' varying and complex needs.
- The progress pupils make throughout the school is variable. This is because the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent. In particular, most-able pupils are not routinely challenged to ensure they make the progress they are capable of.
- Attendance is not yet good enough to ensure that pupils are regularly in school and able to achieve their best.
- Leaders' monitoring of assessment and the quality of teaching has not been frequent and broad enough. As a result, leaders do not know how well the pupils are achieving in all areas of the curriculum.
- Governors do not routinely evaluate the information they are given to enable them to question and challenge leaders about how quickly the school is improving.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher is clear about what is required to improve the school.
- Pupils are supported well when they leave St Luke's and transition arrangements are well organised. This results in pupils having confidence in their next steps to further education.
- Staff morale is high. All staff are very positive and share a commitment and enthusiasm to make the changes necessary.
- The support for pupils at the Forest House Education Centre is effective. Pupils accessing this provision achieve well for the short time they are placed in the unit.
- Pupils behave well and are proud of their school. They are polite, calm and willing to engage with their education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leadership roles and responsibilities are clear so there are fully understood lines of accountability at all levels
 - safeguarding procedures are more rigorously checked by leaders to always ensure there are no gaps in training and knowledge
 - governors check the information they are provided with so they are able to precisely hold leaders to account for the school's performance
 - the role of phase and middle leaders is developed across all key stages by ensuring leaders are given sufficient leadership training to help them effectively contribute to school improvement
 - leaders routinely monitor and check what difference their actions are making to improve teaching and learning in all areas of the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and, thereby, pupils' outcomes by making sure that:
 - staff adjust learning activities so that they are well suited to pupils' needs and accurately take into account pupils' starting points
 - staff ensure that tasks are sufficiently and appropriately challenging for pupils, especially those who are most able
 - staff plan effectively to meet the additional needs of pupils with different and more complex types of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and obtain the necessary resources when they join the school
 - assessment is precise and checked with external sources to ensure their accuracy and challenge.
- Improve attendance further, ensuring a higher percentage of pupils do not miss out on their full school entitlement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- There have been significant challenges that have impacted on the pace of school improvement. The executive headteacher has been managing a number of changes in staff and leadership and, in addition, an increase in the number of pupils admitted to the school. This has resulted in planned improvements being in their infancy and these have not had time to show an impact in improving the quality of teaching and learning and leadership and management.
- The appointment of the executive headteacher has led to a strongly articulated vision and passion to improve the provision at St Luke's School. All staff have a desire to continue this journey of improvement. However, leadership and management require improvement because there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment throughout the school at this time. Consequently, pupils do not achieve consistently well.
- A review of leadership skills has resulted in some new leaders being appointed. These leaders are not established enough to have made a difference to the quality of education in their areas of responsibility at this time.
- Leaders' view of progress is overgenerous. The level of challenge in lessons and in the work scrutiny did not reflect the school's view that a high percentage of pupils were exceeding expectations.
- The system of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is understood and appreciated by staff but lacks rigour and frequency to make effective changes and improvements.
- Parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire and free-text responses had mixed views of the school. Some parents voiced concerns about the way the school communicates with them about their children's progress and about changes happening in the school. They were unsure about how happy their children are at school. On the other hand, a high proportion of parents were highly complimentary and praised the work of school staff.
- External views of the school's effectiveness by the local authority stated that there was an issue of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and the progress for pupils. External advice has not been acted on in a timely manner and so advice has not provided sufficient impact for improvement.
- The executive headteacher has instigated a number of changes in a short period of time and many of these are beginning to improve the leadership processes within the school. For example, he has been proactive in obtaining additional expertise such as a sensory integration specialist and additional speech and language support.
- Pupils are happy and confident in school and are enjoying using some of the new facilities and support offered to them. This leads to greater readiness for learning in the classrooms.
- The provision at the Forest House Education Centre has been improved since the last inspection, which has resulted in a good standard of education within this setting.

Governance of the school

- Governors have an open and transparent relationship with senior leaders. However, they do not analyse some of the information they receive to enable them to scrutinise or question in detail. They have an increasing understanding of their strategic role, and they are supported well by the executive headteacher.
- Governors have begun to challenge leaders so that they are holding them to account for the school improving. However, they have not responded to the lack of pace of changes needed to ensure a good standard of education throughout the school.
- Governors have a secure knowledge of aspects of the safeguarding procedures. However, they have not regularly checked in detail that all actions are followed up or records updated on the new system.
- Governors have been involved in the journey towards moving the school to federation status and instrumental in the recent appointments to improve leadership capacity.
- Governors are eager to do their best to support school improvement. However, they recognise that they need further guidance to achieve this. They have, wisely, commissioned an external review of governance to evaluate and improve their effectiveness in recognition that they need further guidance to achieve this.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All safeguarding policies, procedures and systems are in place. Leaders ensure that all legal checks on the suitability of staff, including volunteers, are made and recorded so leaders know they are suitable to work with pupils.
- Staff have all received up-to-date safeguarding training and leaders keep a record of who has undergone the training. However, there is a lack of rigour and oversight by leaders in some aspects. For example, leaders cannot easily identify staff who may have missed a training or update.
- Parents feel their children are kept safe. Pupils told inspectors that they felt safe in and around the school and knew who to go to if they needed help.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because there is too much inconsistency throughout the school. As a result, pupils' progress is too variable.
- Teachers do not consistently plan activities that are suited to pupils' needs. On occasions, activities do not stretch and challenge the most able pupils to work independently or on harder activities.
- Support for the least able pupils is generally in place in the classrooms. However, at times, these pupils do not make as much progress as they could. On occasion, staff try to do too much for the pupils, so they do not routinely have opportunities to gain

independence and learn by taking risks.

- The wider curriculum is taught, but it is not clear how this is planned or assessed across the school to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum and teachers therefore know how well pupils achieve in areas other than English, mathematics and personal development.
- The school's chosen assessment system is used by staff to chart progress in communication, mathematics, behaviour and social skills. Although, it enables gaps in progress for individuals and groups to be identified in these areas, the information is not used so leaders can make informed judgements about progress in all areas.
- While there are examples of responding to pupils' interests in specific lessons such as animal care and cookery, these are not consistent throughout the school and considered for their impact on progress.
- Work in pupils' books shows that they make some progress over time, but not consistently in all key stages. This is because the starting points of pupils' knowledge are not considered effectively in teachers' planning. For example, some pupils were completing work on making amounts of money using coins of one value, then they went on to a much higher value, then returned to the lower value.
- When activities are well planned, pupils respond positively. For example, during the cross-curricular safety day, pupils were very involved and this helped teams of pupils to work in different groups and make links with their learning about safety around fire. They were motivated and engaged in the activities and, consequently, achieved well.
- The recently introduced sensory activities are supporting a minority of pupils in specialist areas. Where this was the case, pupils benefited from this provision.
- Teachers promote the development of key literacy skills and the principles of promoting reading. This is seen, for example, through the use of reading areas across the school and in the use of resources such as visual cues and phonics strategy cards.
- Activities in some key stage four classes were well suited to the needs of the pupils. This led to positive relationships in the class between teachers and pupils and between pupils. This age-appropriate work was well presented and pupils were positive about what they were learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils told the inspectors that they feel safe and are supported in lessons on how to keep themselves safe. They know who they can talk to in school if they have any concerns.
- Pupils think bullying is rare and said they know how to ask for help if anything happens.
- Pupils play safely, positively and treat each other with kindness, ensuring all are included in games. Adults are very nurturing at breaktimes, which are well supervised

so pupils are not anxious and behave well.

- There is an effective and supportive transition programme when pupils join the school, and in their transition out of the school to post-16 placements at the local college. This ensures that pupils feel safe and secure in their next stage of education.
- Supported work-experience placements take place for the majority of Year 10 and 11 pupils. Staff leading this area are working towards pupils gaining accreditation through the National Careers Education Guidance quality mark. This means that pupils' preparation for the world of work is well designed, focused and within the national guidelines and expectations for all schools.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move around the school politely, respecting each other and being helpful to visitors.
- The vast majority of pupils conduct themselves well in lessons, listening politely and sensibly undertaking the tasks asked of them.
- Pupils are happy to talk to visitors, for example working with community police officers who joined in the safety day for key stage 3 pupils on the theme day during the inspection.
- Although there were a few incidents of inappropriate behaviour, high expectations meant that they were managed well and appropriately by the staff.
- Pupils with additional social, emotional and behavioural needs are managed well by specialist staff in their classrooms, and the pupils are beginning to be able to self-regulate their emotions and behaviours and return to lessons.
- Some staff are trained in de-escalation methods for those pupils who present very challenging behaviours that put themselves or others at risk. The number and nature of the use of such methods have reduced and changed considerably.
- Pupils at the Forest House Centre behave well and cooperate together for short periods of time despite their considerable challenges with mental health issues. This is managed very well alongside the support of health colleagues in the placement.
- Although attendance is improving, and systems are in place to check, leaders need to continue to ensure that they work on improving attendance for all pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The outcomes for pupils at St Luke's are not yet consistently good enough across all key stages and areas of the curriculum.
- The assessment system in use is too narrow to show progress in all areas of work.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers' judgements about pupils' work are checked and moderated sufficiently.
- The majority of pupils achieve entry level qualifications in the core subjects of English and mathematics, which they can take on to college and build on for their future

learning.

- Most Year 10 and 11 pupils are able to participate in work experience which leads to a sense of the world of work.
- The personal and social progress of pupils enables them to develop resilience and confidence to access college placements on leaving school.
- Transition to the local further education college is well planned, checked up on and supported with pupils settling in well.
- Outcomes for pupils at the Forest House Education Centre are good. Pupils achieve well in the short time they are in the placement. They achieve GCSEs in core subjects and in subjects such as art if they are able to.

School details

Unique reference number	117671
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10054381

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ros Wood
Executive Head teacher	Stephen Houlton-Allen
Telephone number	01582 626 727
Website	www.st.lukes.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@stlukes.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 to 7 February 2014

Information about this school

- Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, a decision was made to recruit the current executive headteacher to lead and develop a federation of two special schools, which are St. Luke's (also responsible for the Forest House Education centre) and The Collett School.
- The current executive headteacher took up post in September 2017 at the request of the local authority because the previous headteacher left.
- St. Luke's School is a large special school, and a high number of pupils joined in this school year.
- The school is also responsible for the Forest House Education Centre, which is a tier-four hospital provision for pupils who have severe mental health and emotional difficulties and who are placed there for short-term treatment.
- All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, usually for moderate or severe learning difficulties but, more recently, some pupils have an EHC plan for social,

emotional and mental health difficulties.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across all key stages in the school, sometimes accompanied by senior members of staff.
- An inspector met with members of the school council to talk about their experiences at St. Luke's.
- The lead inspector met with the school's school improvement partner who was commissioned on behalf of the Local Authority.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the designated safeguarding lead and phase leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and another member of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke to one parent on the telephone and considered a number of free-text responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. Thirty-six responses to Parent View were taken into account.
- Inspectors took into account the 55 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in books across a range of core subjects, both in the classroom and during a separate work scrutiny.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including the school's website, self-evaluation and improvement plans, progress and attainment data, policies, monitoring information and minutes of governing body meetings. They looked at safeguarding information, pupils' files, behaviour and attendance records and the school's checks on staff recruitment.

Inspection team

Jackie Mullan, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lynda Walker	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Pardy	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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