

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Barnstaple

Chanters Hill, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 8DN

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Leaders effectively promote pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils feel valued and know whom to talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils enjoy school and attend well.
- Mathematics is a strength. Staff provide suitably challenging learning for all pupils.
- Governors and representatives from the trust know precisely how well the school is performing. They provide meaningful challenge for school leaders, based on precise information about pupils' progress.
- Foundation subject leaders are enthusiastic about improving standards in their subjects, but this work is in its early stages. They have strong leaders around them to support them in achieving this aim.
- Current pupils make strong progress in writing. The new approach to teaching writing is embedding well. However, while teaching is mostly good, the challenge for higher attaining pupils is not yet consistent across the school.
- The early years outdoor provision is an awkward space for staff to manage. They work tirelessly to overcome this. However, there are times when children access activities that are not well matched to their emerging needs.
- Leaders, at all levels, accurately evaluate the school's performance. Their improvement priorities are based on robust and accurate monitoring.
- Early years provides children with a strong start to their school life. Over time, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been higher than national averages.
- Pupils make strong progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. In recent years, key stage 2 pupils' progress has been significantly above national averages in these subjects.
- Physical education (PE) is an important pillar of the school's curriculum. Pupils access high-quality lessons and some further their development outside school.
- Safeguarding across the school is effective, recruitment checks are robust, and staff have the training they need to maintain pupils' welfare.
- Staff across the school share leaders' vision for improvement. Staff feel valued, particularly through the principal's efforts to reduce workload. Staff are effective in promoting pupils' progress.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make strong progress. However, on occasions, targets lack precision and pupils have few opportunities to improve.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management to ensure that:
 - foundation subject leaders continue to receive the support they need to effectively monitor and review standards in their areas of responsibility, including curriculum design
 - academic targets in place to support pupils with SEND are checked for suitability and regularly reviewed to evaluate their impact on pupils' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that higher attaining pupils across the school are sufficiently challenged in writing so a greater proportion are working at the higher standard.
- Further improve the quality of early years provision so that children in both the Reception and Nursery class access activities that are well matched to their emerging needs, particularly in the outdoor continuous provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal, ably supported by his leadership team, has been effective in bringing about improvements since the previous inspection. Together they have set high expectations for both pupils and staff. Leaders form a cohesive team, joined by a shared vision and drive. Together they have helped to shape and nurture an effective staff team whose members support leaders' vision for school improvement. Consequently, school leaders have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders have an accurate evaluation of the school's performance. Leaders set priorities for improvement that are relevant, based on robust, accurate monitoring. Leaders have shown that where they focus their energies, impact is evident. This can be seen in mathematics and reading, where leaders' actions have resulted in improvements in pupils' progress. While writing is still a work in progress, current pupils are making improved progress. Leaders are having a demonstrable impact on securing school improvements.
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have in place appropriate support and interventions to support pupils' progress, with the aim of pupils 'keeping up, not catching up'. Over time, this has helped disadvantaged pupils to make strong progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. Leaders recognise that a proportion of pupils with SEND are higher attaining. They have adapted the use of the pupil premium well to support their individual needs.
- Leaders use the PE and sport premium funding well. PE is an important feature of the school. Pupils speak passionately about the impact PE has on their day-to-day life in school. Pupils benefit from high-quality lessons, including swimming, and a range of sporting activities to participate in. Most pupils can swim 25 metres unaided by the end of key stage 2. In addition, leaders expose pupils to a range of different sports, which some choose to take up outside school. Pupils have regular opportunities to compete in sporting events and, over time, are becoming increasingly successful in these events.
- Parents and carers are positive about the school. They feel that their children are well supported. Parents of children with SEND are overwhelmingly positive, valuing the support and nurture that staff have provided to families, particularly when identifying specific needs at an early stage. Parents value the 'family feel' of the school and the openness of leaders to discuss issues should they arise. Most parents state that their children are happy in school and enjoy learning. Parents appreciate how well leaders and staff have brought about improvements. As a result, most parents would recommend the school.
- Staff feel valued by leaders, stating that leaders recognise the contribution they make towards school improvement. They acknowledge how much leaders consider their well-being, particularly around workload. One member of staff, whose views represent those of many, stated that the principal will only introduce something new if it will help children make better progress. They quote the principal as asking, 'Will the children benefit and learn from this?', and that if the answer is 'no', leaders will not add this to

staff workload. Staff feel that leaders' approach to workload is refreshing and one not often seen in education.

- Leaders ensure that pupils access a rich and varied curriculum. Pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their knowledge across a range of subjects. These are often linked by a topic, such as 'Commotion in the Ocean', which has an environmental focus. Pupils have opportunities to learn about different faiths, including comparing the beliefs of Muslims and Christians. Pupils also have regular opportunities to develop their musical capabilities, including their familiarity with musical notes and how to follow them when playing an instrument. Leaders' actions ensure that pupils make progress across a range of subjects.
- Leaders' actions to improve pupils' attendance have been effective. In 2016, absence and persistent absence were higher than the national averages. However, leaders have made sustained improvements. Pupils attend well, and few regularly miss school.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has brought about improvements to the provision for pupils with SEND. Over time, she has supported class teachers so that they are able to set pupils' targets for improvement. Pupils with SEND make strong progress, particularly against non-academic targets. However, the evidence to support the setting of academic targets is varied, because staff do not always consider closely enough what pupils already know, or provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to make progress against their set targets.
- Foundation subject leaders are enthusiastic about their subjects. They are beginning to increase the amount of monitoring and curriculum work across the school, but this is not yet fully implemented. Senior leaders recognise the need to look closely at the progression across all subjects and review the impact on pupils' progress.

Governance of the school

- The school is a part of Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust. Recently, the trust revised its schemes of delegation, which placed accountability for the school solely with the director and deputy director of education and the chief operating officer. Together, they have accurately evaluated the impact of the school's work, knowing its strengths and areas for improvement. There have been recent opportunities the school has benefited from, including the work on developing pupils' writing, which aligns with school leaders' own improvement priorities and the work to support pupils with SEND. School leaders and members of the governing body are positive about how trust representatives are facilitating opportunities for them to collaborate with other schools and share good practice.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's performance. While trust representatives take sole responsibility for holding leaders to account, governors provide an additional layer of accountability. They work closely with staff to keep track of how well leaders' actions are bringing about improvements. Governors receive detailed information about how well the school is performing from the principal, by way of a regular report. They have time to consider this information prior to meetings, so they can pose questions about this information and, where necessary, hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that appointment procedures for new staff are robust. Leaders carry out the necessary checks to determine whether adults are suitable to work with children. They keep this information on the school's single central record. Once appointed, staff complete a thorough induction programme which enables them to be clear about their safeguarding responsibilities and to be brought up to speed with the school's approach to safeguarding children. Staff receive ongoing professional development to make sure they are up to date with training and guidance.
- Staff are vigilant when recognising concerns about pupils' welfare. They record these concerns in detail, passing these on to the designated leaders of safeguarding. Leaders use this information to decide on next steps, determining whether external support is needed to work with families or children. Leaders take proportionate action based on the information they have about children. They consider concerns over time, so they can recognise patterns or trends. As a result, pupils' welfare is of highest priority and staff help to maintain pupils' safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils. They set suitably challenging activities in most subjects, particularly in reading and mathematics, which promotes strong progress in these areas. Teachers use questioning well to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers apply their strong subject knowledge to set activities that closely meet the needs of most pupils.
- Teachers deploy support staff well. These staff know how best to support pupils, including those with SEND. Support staff facilitate learning for pupils by asking probing questions to provide challenge and support.
- Teachers provide strong opportunities for most pupils to develop their writing. Through a recent approach to writing, teachers encourage pupils to get to grips with a range of genres, ensuring that they know the key features well so they can apply these themselves. Teachers promote vocabulary well, from early years onwards, so pupils have an increasing bank of interesting and relevant words they can use themselves. However, teachers' efforts to provide further challenge for higher attaining pupils is not yet consistently applied.
- Teachers provide high-quality opportunities for pupils to read widely and often. Pupils read a range of books before completing a short quiz to determine how well they understand what they have read. Pupils enjoy these opportunities and retain the key features of the text well. For pupils who are struggling, teachers signpost them to the relevant support that will enable them to keep up.
- Teachers support pupils' mathematical understanding well. They ensure that pupils access the full breadth of the curriculum, with a clear focus on pupils establishing a solid and secure understanding of number as a prerequisite to future learning. Teachers provide high-quality opportunities for pupils to develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving knowledge. Teachers respond well to pupils' ongoing

progress in mathematics and adapt lessons well, considering this information.

- Pupils engage well in lessons. Teachers ensure lessons are interesting and challenging for most pupils. The strong cross-curricular links spark pupils' interest. Pupils engage in meaningful discussions about what they are learning and focus well on the activities that staff ask them to complete.
- Teachers and support staff have a secure understanding of pupils with SEND in their class. With the support of the SENCo, teachers are becoming increasingly confident in setting pupils' targets to help promote progress, where previously they lacked the knowledge to do so. Teachers tailor most of these targets well to pupils' emerging needs, but some academic targets are not yet having the desired impact. This occurs when pupils do not have sufficient time to work on their target or where targets lack precision, so that pupils do not receive enough support to help them succeed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of British values. They can explain how they apply these in their own lives, both at school and home. Pupils recognise that while the school is a Catholic primary school, not all pupils have the same beliefs. They are clear that this is an example of individual liberty. They show unequivocal and mutual respect for their peers, demonstrating an astute awareness of the importance of equality.
- Pupils are clear about how to stay safe when using the internet. They recall the key 'rules' that will enable their internet experiences to be positive, while minimising risk. Pupils are particularly clear about what they should do if someone they do not know attempts to initiate a conversation through a game or social media.
- Pupils know how to live an active and healthy lifestyle. They benefit from a wide range of PE opportunities across a range of sports. Some pupils have continued their participation in a sport away from school, after staff introduced them to it during lessons.
- Promoting pupils' mental health is a key priority for the school. Leaders ensure pupils feel supported and know whom to go to if they feel as if they are struggling in any way. Through both ongoing work and regular events, leaders make sure mental health retains a high profile across the school. During a recent 'this is me' event, pupils and staff wore white t-shirts which their peers covered with positive comments and affirmations, recognising their individual qualities. In recognition of the school's work, members of the Royal Family wrote a letter to the school, recognising them for their efforts to promote mental health awareness.
- The school's curriculum considers the future of the environment. 'On Care for Our Common Home' is a focus of Pope Francis, placing emphasis on the need to care for and protect the planet. School leaders have put this at the heart of their curriculum. Pupils are knowledgeable about the planet and how best to look after it. During the inspection, a pupil in the school received a letter from a representative of the Pope to acknowledge the school's efforts in promoting the Pope's priority, which is also known

as 'Laudato si'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils attend well. Pupils' absence rates are in line with national averages and have been for the previous two years. Prior to this, absence rates were high. In addition, the proportion of pupils who regularly miss school has also fallen. Persistent absence has been lower than the national averages for the previous two years. Pupils enjoy school and their strong attendance is an indicator of their positive attitudes towards school.
- Pupils are positive about behaviour across the school. They state that good behaviour is a strength and instances of bullying are rare.
- Pupils conduct themselves well across the school. Staff actively promote the use of good manners, starting in Nursery. Nursery staff encourage children to say 'please' and 'thank you'. This provides a solid foundation for future conduct and pupils throughout the school demonstrate courtesy and care towards adults and their peers.
- Pupils engage well in lessons. They enjoy what they are learning and are attentive and hooked in on the lessons' content and the activities that staff provide.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress across key stage 2 has improved since the previous inspection, particularly in reading and mathematics. In 2017 and 2018, pupils' progress across these subjects placed the school in the top 20% of all schools nationally. While writing progress has not been as good, current pupils are making strong progress.
- Pupils make strong progress in early reading and their acquisition of phonic knowledge. From early years onwards, pupils learn about letters and the sounds they represent and apply this knowledge to suitable reading books, where books match the sounds they have been practising. As a result, the proportion of pupils meeting the standard expected in the phonics screening check in both Year 1 and the Year 2 re-takes has been consistently above the national averages.
- Pupils make strong progress in mathematics. They access suitably challenging activities, which teachers tailor to meet their emerging needs, using information about pupils' ongoing progress. Pupils have opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving knowledge, using their secure understanding of numbers to support them. As a result, pupils access the breadth of the mathematics curriculum, progressing well from lesson to lesson.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress from their starting points, particularly in reading. Pupils benefit from reading recovery sessions, helping them to acquire the necessary knowledge so they can access the breadth of the school's curriculum. Pupils also benefit from social, emotional and mental health support and speech and language support from an early age. Consequently, in 2018, disadvantaged pupils in the Reception class outperformed other pupils nationally, with a greater proportion achieving a good level of development.

- Pupils benefit from access to a wide and varied curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to develop their knowledge across a range of foundation subjects. They also access lessons from specialist teachers in music and PE.
- Pupils, including those who require therapeutic and pastoral support, benefit from regular opportunities to read to dogs, who are trained to sit quietly with children when they are reading. Pupils state they value their time with the dogs and it helps them to relax while reading. While pupils read, the dogs sit beside them, providing a calm, nurturing reading experience.
- Pupils are making improved progress in writing, even though over time, progress across key stage 2 has declined. However, current pupils' workbooks show that pupils are developing their knowledge well across a range of genres and can apply what they have learned through regular high-quality writing opportunities. Higher attaining writers remain a priority for the school, with senior leaders recognising that these pupils could benefit from greater challenge so that more might be working at the higher standard.
- Pupils with SEND make strong progress from their starting points, particularly their academic progress over time. Current pupils with SEND benefit from high-quality support, particularly pastoral support. However, occasionally, pupils' current academic targets are not as precise as others and do not consider closely enough what pupils already know, can do or understand. Consequently, opportunities to make progress vary. This can result in targets repeating over time or lacking challenge, slowing progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Over time, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception Year has been higher than the national averages. As a result, children are well prepared for the transition to key stage 1.
- The school has benefited from the amalgamation of Nursery into the early years provision, which caters for children from the age of two. Staff across the Nursery class and the Reception class work closely with one another, sharing good practice and information about children's ongoing progress. Since the amalgamation, children have begun Reception Year with stronger starting points and staff know how best to meet their emerging needs.
- Adults' work to promote children's speaking and understanding is well developed. Adults expose children to high-quality vocabulary and sentence stems from an early age, for them to use themselves. Children apply these well, and children from a young age are confident to communicate, to adults and peers alike, what it is they are learning.
- Adults have high expectations of all children across the early years provision. The staff team members work well with one another, sharing ideas and information about what children know, can do and understand. Adults make a range of observations about children's progress and these contribute to the evidence to support teachers' judgements about children's knowledge and understanding. As a result, teachers' assessments of children are accurate.

- Children make strong progress from their starting points, particularly in writing. Children typically begin Reception Year able to write their own names and some can recognise some letters and the sounds they represent. They quickly develop their writing, applying their phonic knowledge accurately. Children have opportunities to write across a range of themes and apply vocabulary they have learned with accuracy.
- Safeguarding is effective. Adults have the necessary training to support them in their work, including care for two-year-olds. Adults supervise children well and across the provision the ratio of adults to children is at the required level. All staff have paediatric first-aid training and have completed child protection training. As a result, children are safe, and adults look after them well.
- Children's early reading and phonic knowledge are strengths. Adults began to teach children about letters and the sounds they represent from the very beginning of the academic year. Children continue to develop this knowledge throughout Reception Year and continue to make strong progress. Children benefit from visual cues and prompts which help them when reading and writing. Consequently, most children are on track to meet the early learning goals within the literacy strand of the early years framework.
- The learning environment, particularly in the Reception class, is vibrant and promotes children's learning. During the inspection, the themes of 'Commotion in the Ocean' and 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' were evident across the provision. Children have high-quality opportunities to develop their knowledge with explicit links to these themes, for example in counting and adding different types of seashells, helping children to develop their sense of number. As a result, children make strong progress from their starting points.
- Adults have a good understanding of the children they work with. They design and provide activities to meet children's emerging needs. This works best when adults are on hand to support children. However, while most children participate well, there are times when the activities do not have the intended impact. When this occurs, children move quickly from one activity to another without benefiting fully from the activity. Adults require more support to help make activities engaging so that children access them without their support.
- The outdoor provision is an awkward, tricky space to arrange. Adults work tirelessly to try and make this beneficial to children's early development. As children from both the Nursery and the Reception class share this space, there are times when children, whose ages range from two to five, are completing the same activity. Consequently, some activities lack sufficient challenge for those in the Reception class.

School details

Unique reference number	140739
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10088329

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Sandy Anderson
Principal	Robert Meech
Telephone number	01271345164
Website	www.ourladys.devon.sch.uk
Email address	principal@olcs.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 January 2017

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust.
- The school is in the top 20% of all schools for the proportion of pupils who require SEN support.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with national averages.
- In 2017, the school extended to accommodate for children of Nursery age. This was an amalgamation of a setting that was already operating on the school site.
- The school's most recent section 48 report was in March 2015.

Information about this inspection

- At the beginning of the inspection, the lead inspector made clear to school leaders they could participate fully during inspection activity, should they wish. Leaders accepted. Inspectors carried out all activities in collaboration with the principal, assistant headteachers or subject leaders, except for meetings with key stakeholders such as the governing body and representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors visited classrooms, accompanied by the principal or assistant headteachers, to consider the approaches adopted by leaders to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives from the trust, including the deputy director of education and the CEO. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the local governing body, including one representative who also sits on the trust's board of directors.
- Inspectors evaluated pupils' progress by considering the work in pupils' workbooks. Inspectors conducted these activities with subject leaders.
- The inspection team met with leaders across the school, including subject leaders, the SENCo, the leaders responsible for additional funding, including the PE and sport and pupil premium, and the early years teaching team.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the designated leader for safeguarding and one of the deputy designated leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered 36 responses to the online parent survey, Parent View. Inspectors also considered 30 responses to the staff survey. A few parents also requested time to speak with inspectors, so they could share their views about the school.

Inspection team

Nathan Kemp, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clair Harrington-Wilcox

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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