

St Laurence's Catholic Primary School

Leaside Avenue, Southdene, Kirkby, Liverpool, Merseyside L32 9QX

Inspection dates

14 to 15 May 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

- The governing body knows the school well. Governors have worked effectively with senior leaders to address a historic legacy of instability in leadership. As a result of leaders' high expectations and ambition, the school is going from strength to strength.
- Subject leaders provide valuable support. They ensure that teachers have secure subject knowledge to teach a range of subjects effectively.
- Leaders ensure that there is a broad and balanced curriculum which is well structured and engaging. This contributes to pupils' strong progress across a range of subjects.
- The majority of pupils benefit from good quality teaching. Teachers plan learning that develops pupils' knowledge and understanding. At times, teachers do not address pupils' misconceptions quickly enough to ensure that mistakes are not repeated.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), although improving, is not as strong in writing as it is in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good. They are polite, respectful and kind. Pupils wear their uniform with pride and value the opportunities that they receive to contribute to the leadership of the school across a variety of roles.
- The attainment of pupils at the end of key stages 1 and 2 has increased over time. Pupils' attainment in 2018 was in line with that seen nationally at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Phonics is taught well in early years and key stage 1. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check matches the national average.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a strength of the school. It links closely to pupils' understanding of British values.
- Pupils make good progress in the early years. However, learning in the Reception Year does not always provide experiences which are demanding enough to challenge children's thinking sufficiently.
- Leaders' actions have not had enough impact on improving the attainment of the most able pupils in school, especially in writing and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders provide teachers with the support, knowledge and skills that they need to enable the most able pupils to attain greater depth in writing or the higher standard in mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Improve the quality of provision further in the Reception Year by ensuring that learning consistently provides demanding experiences for children.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND receive the academic support required to develop further the progress that they make in writing
 - teachers address misconceptions quickly so that pupils do not repeat the same mistakes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new headteacher and assistant headteacher, working with other leaders, have been highly effective in addressing historical weaknesses in leadership, following a period of staffing instability. As a result of their focus and determination, leadership is now effective. Governors commented that, 'The headteacher and assistant headteacher are relentless in the pursuit of excellence.' Inspection evidence confirms their views to be true.
- Leaders ensure that the school's vision, based around the gospel values of love, respect and justice, is well embedded. This is reflected clearly in the way in which staff and pupils conduct themselves. A shared culture of high expectations, aspiration and enthusiasm for learning, is clearly evident. All staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that the school has improved since the previous inspection and that they are proud to be members of the school community.
- Leaders prioritise the importance of professional development. They ensure that training is used effectively so that staff have the skills that they require to bring about school improvement. For example, training for all staff in the teaching of reading has brought about a significant increase in pupils' attainment in reading at key stages 1 and 2. All members of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey strongly agreed that training had supported, challenged and encouraged their professional development.
- Subject leaders are making a positive contribution to the development of the school. They provide teachers with appropriate guidance and support to ensure that teaching continues to improve. Subject leaders are working effectively with teachers to ensure that the new system to analyse pupils' progress is being used well by teachers to inform future learning.
- The curriculum is well designed to ensure that pupils receive a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities. The curriculum provides well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop their experience and deepen their learning through a variety of visits. For example, pupils spoke with excitement about residential activities which enable them to develop their sporting skills and their experience of a locality different to the one in which they live.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven effectively through the curriculum. Pupils receive a broad range of opportunities to develop their understanding in these areas, for example by studying Robert Burns day, fair trade and international women's day. As a result, they demonstrate a clear understanding of wider issues such as justice and respect and they are able to explain how these link to British values.
- Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from extra-curricular activities which enhance their learning. A wide range of sporting activities take place together alongside opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in activities such as singing and chess.
- Pupil premium funding has been used well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress in most subjects, often from low starting points. The school's strategy identifies potential barriers to pupils' learning. Leaders are effective in evaluating the

impact of the work to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils. While the progress of this group is weaker in writing, disadvantaged pupils have made strong progress in reading and mathematics.

- Leaders use the sport premium funding in an effective manner to ensure that pupils can enjoy physical activity and take part in competitive sport. Pupils achieve great success in inter-school tournaments. Staff and pupils were proud to receive a platinum award for sporting achievement in 2017 and 2018.
- Leaders' work to improve their relationship with parents and carers has been highly successful. The vast proportion of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, spoke in a highly positive manner about the school. This was most notably about the improvements to leadership. A typical comment, reflecting the views of many who shared their views through the free-text option, was, 'The school is very well led and managed. It is like a big community.'
- There have been historic inconsistencies in the leadership of SEND over time. Leaders are addressing this issue effectively. The school's leader for SEND is well trained and provides effective support for teachers. Leaders ensure that provision for pupils is now based on accurate performance information. Funding to support learning is spent well. Despite a legacy of underperformance for this group, especially in writing, current pupils with SEND are now beginning to make stronger progress than they have in the past.
- The school has benefited from effective support from the local authority and the Archdiocese. As a consequence, many of the priorities for improvement in the school development plan have been tackled effectively. Leaders are also effective in providing support to other local schools in areas such as moderation of assessment information, and subject development in reading and aspects of personal social, health and economic education.

Governance of the school

- Governance has strengthened further since the previous inspection. The chair of the governing body together with the vice-chair and other governors bring a wealth of knowledge, skill and expertise to their roles. Their hard work and dedication mean that they have been able to deal effectively with the historic instability in leadership.
- Governors gather information about school effectiveness from a wide range of sources. For example, they meet with subject leaders and talk with teachers and pupils. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide effective support and challenge. Governors care deeply about the development of the school and the progress that pupils make.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties. They attend a range of training that ensures they have a good knowledge of safeguarding and are clear about the school's procedures to keep pupils safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The single central record of checks on staff and visitors is compliant with statutory requirements and up to date. Vetting checks on new members of staff are thorough.
- Staff and all those with responsibility for safeguarding receive regular training in relation to safeguarding. Leaders ensure that safeguarding audits are undertaken to evaluate the school's safeguarding procedures. As a result, all staff are well equipped to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that adults will help them if they have concerns. They know who the adults with responsibility for safeguarding are. The vast proportion of parents spoke positively about the care that their children receive in school. One comment, reflecting the views of many others, was, 'I feel safe knowing that my child is going to be looked after and cared for by such amazing staff.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers are motivated and committed to improvement. They have good subject knowledge in a wide range of subjects. They use that knowledge well to ensure that topics and activities interest pupils and inspire their learning. However, at times, teachers do not address pupils' misconceptions quickly enough to ensure that mistakes are not repeated.
- Phonics is taught effectively in the early years and in key stage 1. Teachers reinforce phonics across other subjects to move pupils' reading, spelling and vocabulary forward. Younger pupils use their phonics skills well to interpret words of which they are unsure.
- The teaching of reading has developed well across the school and pupils receive regular opportunities to respond to the texts that they have read. Teachers promote reading effectively. They regularly read to pupils, often from challenging texts. Teachers ensure that pupils study a broad range of literature which builds effectively from one year to the next. The school's new library contains well-displayed, high-quality fiction and non-fiction books. It is well used and is run by members of Year 6, who encourage other pupils to evaluate the books that they have read. These actions contribute to improvements in pupils' vocabulary and ensure that pupils are developing a deeper understanding of, and love for, books.
- Teachers provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum. Teachers ensure that pupils undertake regular extended writing activities to allow them to apply the skills that they have learned. Classroom and central school areas are used very well to share and celebrate pupils' writing. While there is clear evidence of improved teaching of writing, at times, teaching does not provide enough support to enable disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND to make stronger progress in this subject.
- Mathematics teaching has also improved. Teachers ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to develop their skills in problem-solving and reasoning. Pupils enjoy opportunities to use their mathematical skills and knowledge in other subjects, such as physical education (PE) and science. Work in pupils' books shows evidence of success.

Most pupils are making strong progress in mathematics.

- Teachers provide regular opportunities to enrich pupils' learning across a broad and balanced curriculum. They develop pupils' experiences with visits to local beaches, galleries and to a local city. Such activities are effective in raising pupils' aspirations, broadening their horizons and developing their appreciation of the arts.
- PE and sport are promoted well in school. Pupils benefit from the use of a large sports hall and a wide range of sporting equipment. Pupils are particularly proud of their awards and trophies received for their achievement in competitive sport. The 'daily mile challenge' ensures that pupils have the opportunity to be physically active at the beginning of each day.
- Teachers are ensuring that a stronger focus is being placed on developing pupils' investigative skills in science. Pupils also enjoy taking part in events such as 'British science week', which further develops their scientific and technical knowledge.
- Pupils develop their knowledge of a modern foreign language well throughout key stage 2. Pupils' work is detailed, and those pupils spoken with about their learning were happy to recount Spanish words and sentences that they know.
- Teachers usually have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons. However, some tasks do not routinely challenge the most able pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics. Against the school's expectations for pupils' achievement, this group does not attain as well as other groups in the school.
- Relationships in classrooms are positive. Pupils are eager to participate in learning and they show respect and consideration for the views of others. For example, in an English lesson in Year 5, pupils enjoyed sharing their writing with each other, discussing their achievements.
- Classroom environments are stimulating for pupils. Display is used effectively to guide pupils' learning and to celebrate their achievement across a wide range of subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The breakfast club provides pupils with a positive, healthy and safe start to the school day. This resource is much appreciated by parents. A typical comment made by parents was, 'My daughter loves the breakfast and afterschool club. They are a real success.'
- Pupils are proud of their school and value the opportunities to lead through roles such as head boy and girl, school councillors and buddies for younger children. Pupils recognise their actions have a wider impact. One pupil, reflecting the views of others spoken with, said, 'It's nice to be a school councillor because you can assist other people.'
- Older pupils understand the importance of aspiration and encourage this in their younger school 'buddies'. All pupils have a 'passport' which highlights their aspirations for the future. Pupils enjoy regular opportunities to raise money for charity through events such as coffee mornings and to work in their local community to help others,

including the elderly.

- Pupils are confident, active and happy. Leaders provide pupils with high-quality outdoor spaces. The adventure area, games area and quiet area are used well to ensure that pupils learn, play and mix well with other pupils. Pupils value opportunities to learn about e-safety, and they demonstrate a clear understanding of how to stay safe online and in the real world.
- Play leaders work as 'bully-busters', ensuring that pupils are not treated unkindly when they play outside. As a result, bullying is rare and, where it does happen, pupils feel confident that adults will deal with it effectively.
- The school's 'sensory room' provides pupils with a warm and safe environment where support is provided for those who need time to calm down and to reflect. Pupils speak highly of this provision and understand its importance in promoting relaxation and well-being.
- The personal development and welfare of the small number of pupils attending alternative provision, which is regularly monitored by staff, are good.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils work well in class and without disruption. They have positive attitudes to learning and speak with pride about the work that they have completed. Pupils understand the link between a good education and their future.
- Pupils are polite and well behaved. They wear their uniform with pride and are unreservedly considerate towards others. For example, younger pupils hold the door open for older pupils and for adults. During the inspection, pupils thanked inspectors following meetings.
- Pupils have a very clear understanding of, and respect for, their school values. They understand how these link to wider British values, and they talked with clarity about the importance of justice, mutual respect and kindness.
- Leaders ensure that good attendance is promoted in school. The pastoral leader works closely with families to ensure that their children attend school regularly. Additionally, pupils enjoy a range of rewards for good attendance. Teachers publicise attendance percentages on classroom doors to ensure that good attendance is promoted positively. This focus has been highly successful. Attendance levels are broadly in line with the national average. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing quickly.
- Pupils demonstrate admirable views about equality and diversity. This is because leaders ensure that such issues are encouraged in displays throughout the school building and within the curriculum.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils gain secure phonics knowledge and skills from skilled teaching in the early years and key stage 1. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard the Year 1 phonics screening check is broadly average.
- Work in pupils' books shows that pupils currently at the school are making good progress across a range of subjects. For example, the focus on investigative work in science has supported pupils' progress in this area. Pupils take pride in the quality of their work and it is typically presented to a good standard.
- Published performance information shows a marked improvement in pupils' progress since the previous inspection. In 2018, by the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress in writing and reading was broadly average. The progress that they made by the end of Year 6 in mathematics was above the national average.
- Pupils' attainment at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 has also increased. The school's most recent published performance information shows that it is broadly in line with the national averages
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is typically strong in reading and mathematics. It is less positive in writing.
- The most able pupils are, at times, not challenged as effectively as they should be in subjects such as writing and mathematics. For example, in 2018, published performance information showed that not as many of this group of pupils attained the higher standard or greater depth in mathematics and writing when compared to the national average.
- All pupils who responded to Ofsted's online survey said that they enjoy learning all or most of the time.
- The broad and balanced curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children enter the Nursery Year with skills, knowledge and understanding below those typical for their age in many areas of learning. This is particularly true for children's communication and language skills. From their starting points, children make good progress year-on-year. As a result, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is consistently in line with the national average over time.
- Leadership of the early years is effective. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths of the provision and areas where further work is needed. They work with other local schools looking at ways in which to bring about improvements for children in areas such as communication, language and early writing.
- Children in early years are happy and safe. Safeguarding procedures are effective, and children behave extremely well. They are polite, courteous and cooperate well with each other, regularly sharing equipment. Relationships between adults and children are

strong and contribute effectively to learning. Teachers encourage children to consider risks involved in activities asking them questions such as, 'How can we make this safe?'

- In line with the whole school, staff have placed a strong focus on developing children's early reading, writing and phonics skills. During the inspection, children were writing about their families and were able to build effective sentences, using joining words to connect facts together.
- The work that children complete in their books in the early years shows that they are making good progress across a broad and balanced curriculum. A range of activities are planned which are based on children's areas of interest. For example, children worked with staff when exploring the topic of dinosaurs. They looked at the weight, size, diet and habitat of these creatures. However, in the Reception classes, learning experiences are, at times, not demanding enough to challenge children's thinking sufficiently. As a result, the most able children sometimes do not achieve as highly as they are capable.
- The outdoor environment in the early years has been carefully planned to provide children with opportunities to explore imaginative play and develop further the learning that takes place indoors.
- Parents are actively involved in their children's learning. They benefit from a range of workshops provided by staff on subjects such as phonics and mathematics. Parents also take part in 'family fitness' sessions and enjoy opportunities to stay and play with their children and also to stay and read. Such opportunities help parents to support their children's learning effectively.
- Funding is used well to support the needs of disadvantaged children and those with SEND through additional small group activities and individual support. As a result, these children make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers ensure that information about children's performance is passed up to their new teachers at the end of the Nursery and the Reception Year, and that children have opportunities to visit their new classes. As a result, the children are well prepared for the next stages in their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	104461
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10087802

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	386
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Holmes
Headteacher	Sarah-Jane Carroll
Telephone number	0151 546 4733
Website	www.stlaurences.co.uk
Email address	stlaurence@knowsley.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January to 1 February 2017

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is located in an area of high deprivation.
- The school receives additional funding through the pupil premium funding for a higher-than-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan is typically average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who leave or join the school during the school year is lower than the national average.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club. Leaders also offer a wide

range of other clubs which run after school.

- The school uses alternative provision at Northwood Community Primary School in Kirkby.
- The school's most recent Section 48 inspection for schools with a religious character took place in November 2014.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including information about pupils' attendance, improvement plans, self-evaluation information, safeguarding records, curriculum planning and staff training records.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day and during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 88 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 87 responses to free-text, Ofsted's online survey. Additionally, they took account of 24 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 20 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- An inspector met with representatives of the local authority.
- An inspector met with the chair of governors and four other governors.
- Inspectors talked with pupils informally at playtimes and lunchtimes and observed pupils' movement around the school. Several formal meetings also took place with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors looked at behaviour at the start and end of the school day and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors visited the breakfast club and spoke to pupils who were attending.
- Inspectors undertook a detailed scrutiny of pupils' work and talked with them about their learning. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about the books that they enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher, middle leaders, the leader of the provision for pupils with SEND, the pastoral and attendance leader and with teachers.
- Inspectors carried out a detailed scrutiny of current progress and attendance information for all groups of pupils.
- Inspectors analysed the school's website.
- An inspector spoke on the phone to a representative from the alternative provision.

Inspection team

Gill Pritchard, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Joyce	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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