

St Simon and St Jude CofE Primary School

Astley Road, Leicester LE9 7AE

Inspection dates

25–26 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 worked with pupils, parents and staff to make the school a positive, ambitious place to learn. Pupils feel proud to be part of its community and they wear their new uniform smartly.
- Strong and skilled leadership from the headteacher has brought marked improvements to the quality of education since the last inspection.
- Senior leaders have given staff extensive guidance and training to improve their skills. Good teaching is now thriving.
- Teachers' good knowledge of the subjects they teach and of their pupils means that they match the work they plan well overall to the things that pupils can do.
- Pupils are making good progress across all key stages.
- Attainment is rising across the school. Teachers are filling with urgency any remaining gaps in pupils' learning.
- Because the curriculum is interesting and well matched overall, pupils no longer become bored or lose focus. They pay attention and complete large amounts of work with care and pride.
- Children make strong progress in the early years. They are engrossed in the exciting activities teachers plan for them in the Reception class.
- Pupils enjoy coming to the school to learn. Absence, including persistent absence, is now much lower than typically seen in other schools.
- Staff are very good role models for pupils and uphold the school's ethos and virtues. This helps pupils to be reflective, respectful and caring.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school.
- Skilled staff work tirelessly and sensitively to support the most vulnerable pupils, including those who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour, or who have experienced trauma.
- The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Not enough of them achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Though pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects, some subjects are not planned and delivered as effectively as they need to be. As a result, pupils sometimes do not remember some of the important things they are taught.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, and thereby outcomes, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers challenge the most able pupils consistently, so that the proportions who achieve a greater depth of understanding and the higher standards are at least broadly in line with the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics
 - following the curriculum review, teaching in all subjects enables pupils to recall clearly, and with understanding, the key knowledge they have learned.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The energy, skill and determination of senior leaders have improved markedly the education pupils receive, along with pupils' behaviour. The headteacher, supported by her capable deputy, is making it clear that the school is an aspirational one where high expectations must exist for every pupil.
- To bring about her vision, the headteacher has worked with pupils and staff to refresh the school with a new name, a new uniform that pupils feel proud to wear and, most importantly, a strong ethos and commitment for everyone both to do their best and to be their best.
- Leaders have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and have written a compelling evaluation, supported by robust evidence, to judge the school accurately as a good one. They know that, due to historically weaker teaching, a number of pupils have gaps in their learning and are ensuring that teachers address these relentlessly. The actions leaders are planning are well focused and having the impact leaders intend.
- Senior leaders have provided the staff, including those who feel less confident or who are new to the profession, with bespoke and extensive training to improve their effectiveness.
- The morale of staff is high. The large number who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire gave consistently highly positive feedback. They are proud to work at the school and believe that they are well led. They unanimously feel well supported and treated fairly and believe that leaders are mindful of their workload.
- The headteacher has helped middle leaders to become clear about their role. They are now able to write action plans to improve teaching further in the subjects for which they are responsible. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching continually. They conduct scrutinies of pupils' exercise books, visit classrooms to see how much learning is taking place and meet with pupils to discuss how they can be supported to make even stronger progress.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils learn through topics that focus on a specific subject, such as geography in Y1 with 'Bright Lights, Big City' and art and design in Year 4 with 'Blue Abyss'. Pupils say that they find lessons interesting.
- The curriculum is enhanced considerably through 19 much-enjoyed clubs that develop pupils' interests and nurture their talents across a wide range of areas. These clubs include choir, computing, badminton, art, and 'faith and film'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to the school's work. Pupils have many opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs and to develop an appreciation of the wonder of nature through visits to, for example, the Natural History Museum. They are highly reflective young people, who behave thoughtfully and who care for others. They are keen fundraisers for charities, through events organised by the school council, such as Water Aid. Pupils take responsibilities readily, visiting homes

for older people or singing in the village centre to shoppers.

- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand the need to follow the school rules and play an active part in democratic elections to the school council. Pupils show clear respect and tolerance towards others. For example, they visit mosques and synagogues to learn about religions different from their own.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium well. They ensure that disadvantaged pupils received good-quality support, so that they can make strong progress from their starting points.
- The headteacher is also the coordinator for the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). She ensures that additional funding for these pupils is used wisely. Upon taking up this responsibility, she reviewed the needs of each pupil on the SEND register. She concluded that too many pupils had been wrongly placed on this register, due to poor internal assessment. The proportion has fallen considerably as the quality of teaching has risen, and this trend is continuing. She is checking continually to ensure that the support is of high quality for those who need to remain on the register, and that these pupils make good progress.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium is well spent. It enables increasing participation in, for instance, athletics, basketball, dodge ball, rugby and cricket. There are also opportunities for pupils to take part in a wide range of inter-school competitions, such as tri-golf and hockey.
- The school is developing a reputation for good practice, which leaders in other schools are keen to learn from. Colleagues from other schools have already visited St Simon and St Jude to see for themselves the improvements teachers have made in their teaching of phonics and handwriting.
- Parents' and carers' views of the school are positive. Most feel that, due to much better leadership, it is quickly improving. As one parent explained to inspectors: 'The leadership in the school has gone through a transformation. I hope you see the difference from your last visit, because we can as parents.'
- Because leaders have prioritised improvements in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills, they are aware that not all subjects are as well planned and delivered as they could be. They have made addressing this central to their school improvement work for the coming academic year.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body is now led by a chair who is highly experienced in school leadership and who is supporting her colleagues to ensure that they perform their strategic role well.
- While being strongly supportive of leaders' work to improve the school, minutes of the local governing body show that governors do not shy away from holding them to account effectively. For example, they ask questions about how the pupil premium is spent and are vigilant in tracking the impact of the support this money provides. They share leaders' ambitions for the school and its pupils and are insistent that the rate of improvement must not slow.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are thoroughly trained in safeguarding. Staff are both alert for the many signs that may indicate that a pupil is being abused and understanding of their responsibility to do all they can to protect vulnerable pupils. They understand that they must report any safeguarding concerns to senior leaders immediately.
- Safeguarding records seen by inspectors show that leaders work well with parents and do not hesitate to make referrals to a range of external agencies where this is necessary. They will escalate their concerns, if they feel that the response they receive is insufficient.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers ensure that there is a positive climate for learning in all classes, including the early years. Teachers encourage pupils to cooperate and work together, and to listen to each other's ideas and responses. As a result, pupils take an active part in lessons.
- Teachers expect pupils to be settled and to complete their work carefully in a well-organised way and to the best of their ability. Pupils do so. Teachers also expect pupils to be industrious. Again, pupils are. Pupils' productivity is high, with some completing their sixth exercise book this academic year at the time of the inspection.
- Pupils know that teachers have good subject knowledge. This gives pupils confidence that teachers can help them to learn what they do not know and answer questions that they may have.
- Teachers are clear about what pupils can and cannot do. They are highly aware of the remaining gaps any pupils have in their knowledge and are ensuring that these are being quickly addressed. They question pupils well to check their understanding and address any misconceptions pupils may have.
- Teachers are skilled at assessing what pupils know, in relation to the expectations for their ages. Records they complete match precisely to the work pupils produce.
- Teachers show pupils how to use learning resources, such as dictionaries and angle measurers, well, so that pupils can express themselves with precision and check whether their estimates or calculations are correct.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning. They do not help pupils excessively, but ask them to think about their answers and, where necessary, give them clues that may help them. This promotes pupils' independence.
- Pupils inspectors met said that the homework they receive helps them make progress. They say it is useful and is linked well to the lessons they are receiving at the time. Pupils appreciate the good level of choice they are given, when some homework is set.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are given good access both to modern fiction and to classic literature. Pupils enjoy novels such as 'Charlotte's Web' by E. B. White and acclaimed

newer novels, such as Eoin Colfer's 'Artemis Fowl'. They greatly enjoy visiting the school's new library and say there are plenty of exciting books available to interest everyone. Teachers promote a love of reading further through prominent notices around the school, showing the books they are reading themselves.

- Phonics is taught well. The reading books that teachers give the weakest readers are appropriate for their ability, which helps these pupils to develop their confidence.
- Teachers ensure that almost all groups of pupils are challenged well. Pupils' exercise books show that, across subjects, the work they receive is appropriate. However, not all teachers challenge the most able pupils sufficiently or give them guidance on how they could develop their skills further. As a result, not enough of these pupils attain as well as they could.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers help pupils to understand how to be successful learners. They give them good advice and support and show them songs and rhymes they can use to help remember things. Pupils are also taught not to give up easily. Inspectors saw repeated instances of pupils persevering, despite not getting an answer right first time.
- The many pupils who inspectors met were keen to explain how they and their friends and siblings felt safe in the school. They say that adults deal well with any rare instances where a pupil is unkind to someone.
- Pupils are taught effectively how to stay safe from roads and strangers and how to recognise when a relationship is positive. They are also taught well how to swim and how to stay safe online.
- Pupils are shown how to stay healthy. They can describe the dangers of poor health and understand the need for a balanced diet and exercise. They enjoy the many opportunities provided for them to do exercise and sport. Schemes and projects that the school uses also help pupils to stay both physically and emotionally healthy.
- Those pupils who have experienced extreme trauma in their families are supported particularly well. They meet with staff and complete activities such as the 'Tree of Feelings' to help them understand and deal with the impact they are enduring.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils say that staff act as good role models for them. This helps them to be respectful to others and to behave in ways that uphold the school's ethos and virtues. Pupils are clear that everyone deserves to be treated equally and with courtesy. They are given regular opportunities to reflect on how they and others behave.
- Pupils are well behaved in class. They work hard and pay attention. They explained to inspectors how the behaviour of pupils has improved greatly over the past year or so.

This is due to higher and clear expectations of their behaviour from staff, as they uphold the new behaviour policy that pupils and their parents have helped to write.

- Around the school, pupils are well behaved. They are polite to adults, letting them pass through doorways first and greeting them politely and with consistently good manners. They come into school calmly and on time, so that lessons can begin promptly.
- Pupils say that they wear their smart new uniform proudly and look after their own and others' property. They keep the school tidy and do not leave litter.
- Pupils enjoy coming to the school to learn. Attendance is rising and is above the national average. Few pupils are now persistently absent from the school.
- The previously high level of pupil exclusions has reduced dramatically. Many pupils were given repeat exclusions. The skilled staff on the school's Emotional Literacy Support Team work very well with pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. Staff help pupils recognise when they are becoming stressed and give them good strategies to deal with their anxieties and frustrations. This support has helped prevent any exclusions for almost two years.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In recent years, the attainment of pupils at the end of key stages 1 and 2 was below average. Pupils were not well prepared for their secondary schools.
- Stronger teaching means that pupils are now making good progress.
- Attainment is rising across the school. In almost all year groups, the proportions who are on track to attain at least the expected standard is improving. For example, attainment at the end of key stage 1 is in line with the national average in mathematics and is now above this in reading. In writing, it remains a little lower, but is also increasing.
- Exercise books from disadvantaged pupils currently in the school show that their overall progress is at least as good, and in many cases stronger, than that of other pupils. This is allowing these pupils to write with confidence, using sentences such as: 'I love my life because it's an adventure', and using ambitious vocabulary such as 'hiding in the dark, ominous cave'.
- Pupils with SEND are making good progress in their work. They are provided with effective support and work that meet their needs.
- The most able pupils overall do not make sufficient progress. Though there are encouraging pockets of improvement in the school, the proportions of pupils who are on track to attain a greater depth of understanding, or the higher standard, in reading, writing and mathematics are too low.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They are taught appropriate phonic strategies to read words they do not recognise. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who attain the expected standard in phonics is broadly in line with the national average.
- In science, pupils show a confident recall of knowledge they have been taught in previous years, such as on magnetism and electrical circuits, and can apply this to aspects of real life, for example in relation to their own homes and equipment. The

subject of art and design is well planned. Thus, pupils have improved their skills in, for example, colour mixing, shading and sketching, as a result of lessons that develop these themes in consecutive years.

- This is not the case for all subjects, however. Lessons in geography, for example, are not sufficiently well sequenced, and there are insufficient opportunities to revisit and build on what pupils already know. As a result, pupils do not demonstrate fluent recall of, for example, the continents of the world. Again, in design technology, pupils are asked to construct strong 3D structures, but cannot do this well enough as they have not been taught first how, for example, triangles are more rigid than rectangles.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership in the early years is effective. The early years leader has a clear and accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and its impact upon children. She has ambitious plans for further improvement, including the opening in September of pre-school provision.
- Teachers plan well to ensure that children receive teaching that meets their needs and challenges them appropriately. They are aware that almost all children enter the school with levels of skills that are below those typically found in children of the same age, particularly in language. They adapt the curriculum to ensure that this aspect is given emphasis. Inspectors saw pupils being asked, in skilful ways, to describe 'cakes' they were making in the mud kitchen.
- Teachers also ensure that children develop an early enjoyment of books, using texts such as 'Mr Gumpy's Outing'. They are given ample opportunities to learn fairy tales and nursery rhymes, with rhyme and repetition, linked to the topics they learn.
- Children learn well in both the classroom and the spacious outdoor environment. In the latter, they practise their phonics by writing words they have learned, while others use egg timers to measure how fast they can run around the outdoor gym. Inspectors also saw them developing their motor skills, by using hockey sticks to guide balls into goals or measuring and describing their throwing.
- Staff are caring and kind, and this helps children feel safe. They also develop children's awareness of safety, by showing them, for example, how to replace carefully the board on the balancing area.
- Despite their young age, children's attention spans are excellent. They pay close attention over sustained periods, because they are engrossed in the exciting activities that are planned for them.
- When assessing children, leaders ensure that they use the information parents give them about the things their children can do at home. Leaders help parents to support their children's learning at home, by showing them how they can help their child to read. They also invite parents into the classroom regularly for informal information sessions about, for instance, phonics.
- Because additional funding is used well over time, disadvantaged children and those with SEND make progress that is at least good from their starting points. As well as helping these children to succeed academically, this funding also provides support

which promotes their emotional well-being.

- From their starting points, children make good progress across all areas of learning. The proportion of children who attain a good level of development is broadly in line with the national average. As in the rest of the school, attainment continues to rise. This year, more than one in five children has exceeded the early learning goal in at least one area of learning. Children leave the early years well prepared for Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	139200
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10087378

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	184
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Karen Allen
Headteacher	Rebecca Dolby-Molson
Telephone number	01455 842 138
Website	http://www.stsimonandstjude.leics.sch.uk
Email address	office@stsimonandstjude.leics.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 May 2017

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is much higher than average.
- The very large majority of pupils are from a White British background. The proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than average.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classrooms. Several of these observations took place with the headteacher. In total, learning was observed in 15 lessons. Inspectors also scrutinised examples of children's work from the early years, along with a wide variety of pupils' exercise books for many different subjects in all year groups, including from a range of different groups of pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the head of the early years, the subject leader for English and mathematics, and members of the governing body. They analysed the 16 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire – Parent View – and spoke with parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors met with different groups of pupils. They also analysed responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's development plan and self-evaluation, policies and records related to safeguarding and pupils with SEND, the school's information about pupils' achievement and attendance, and records of the work of the governing body.

Inspection team

Roary Pownall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pete Strauss

Ofsted Inspector

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