

Inspection of St Lawrence's Church of England Primary Academy

Heslington Road, York, North Yorkshire YO10 5BW

Inspection dates: 7–8 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

This is the school's first inspection since it opened.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have worked hard to create a positive atmosphere in the school. Pupils are happy and show respect to adults. Staff treasure the cultural diversity among pupils. All pupils are included and there is harmony between them. Pupils conduct themselves well. Occasionally, bullying does happen. Staff deal with any instances well to make sure it stops.

There are lots of opportunities for pupils to explore their talents through clubs. During the inspection, the choir were excited about their imminent performance at Sheffield Arena. Similarly, pupils love competing against other schools in sports. The school football team is supported and celebrated by staff and parents alike.

Leaders believe in every individual pupil. They have a track record of improving important aspects. Leaders have greatly improved English and mathematics teaching. Pupils now have much stronger knowledge in these subjects. However, some shortcomings in phonics teaching mean that pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they should. Additionally, leaders are at a very early stage of designing the rest of the curriculum. Teachers do not have enough guidance on the order they should teach knowledge. Similarly, it is not clear what pupils should achieve by given points in time. These factors mean that pupils do not develop knowledge as well as they should.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

This is an improving school. Leaders have reversed the historical culture of low expectations. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, and staff share the view that 'every child can, so every child will'. Leaders have improved pupils' outcomes considerably in English and mathematics at key stage 1 and 2. The trust has played a crucial role in this through challenging and supporting leaders.

The school's Christian values of 'caring, courageous and considerate' are at the heart of every decision leaders make. They show integrity in prioritising pupils' personal development. Pupils become confident and responsible. They take on leadership roles and enjoy adventurous activities, including on residential visits.

Leaders have been successful in improving English and mathematics teaching. Teachers are knowledgeable about these subjects. Pupils have ample opportunity to revisit important concepts. Due to this, they build knowledge well. Yet, for almost all other subjects, the curriculum is not as coherently planned as it needs to be. Pupils' learning is not mapped out in an order that would help them build knowledge systematically. It is not clear what pupils should learn by the end of a topic or unit of work. This leaves pupils with inconsistent knowledge in these subjects.

Across all three key stages, phonics teaching is not fully effective. Staff training in

phonics is very recent and many staff are still developing their skills. They are not consistent in using the school's approach to teaching. For example, not all staff use the agreed actions to help pupils remember sounds. Too often, pupils learning to read use books to practise which contain sounds they do not know. Pupils then lose confidence in reading. They do not become fluent as quickly as they should. Leaders are already working on improving these aspects. They are continuing to train and support staff. They have also ordered new books for pupils.

In the early years, children are well cared for. Staff build secure relationships with children and parents. However, the activities for children to choose independently are not designed well enough. Children do not have frequent chances to practise their new reading, writing and mathematics skills. Adults are not consistently skilled in demonstrating and questioning children. These factors hinder their learning across the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Those who have learning needs work towards specific targets. They have lots of opportunities to consolidate important knowledge. Pupils with social and emotional needs receive high-quality support from staff. This has reduced instances of poor behaviour.

Leaders have improved pupils' attendance rates. Yet around 15% of pupils have regular or prolonged absences. This figure is not reducing. Leaders have high expectations of attendance, and most pupils fulfil these expectations. Leaders work well with families. However, there is more work to do to ensure that all pupils receive their education entitlement.

Leaders have worked hard to build positive relationships with parents. Parents who shared their views during the inspection were very positive. Reflecting the views of many, one parent told us that, 'The school has improved significantly in the last couple of years both in the level of learning and how they look after the children.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know the pupils and their families very well. Leaders use this information to make sure vulnerable pupils get the support they need. This includes counselling and therapeutic work where appropriate. Pupils also benefit from working with staff who are trained in supporting pupils' social and emotional needs.

Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They are knowledgeable about the risks pupils may face. Records in respect of child protection are well maintained. Where necessary, referrals to outside agencies are swift. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The teaching of phonics is not fully effective. There are inconsistencies in the way phonics is taught. Additionally, pupils, particularly lower-attaining pupils, practise using books which are too difficult. Therefore, pupils do not develop their early reading skills as quickly as they should. Leaders' work to embed their chosen approaches to teaching needs to continue. Leaders should also ensure that new books are used appropriately so that pupils learning to decode have books containing only the sounds they know.
- In subjects outside of English, mathematics and religious education (RE), the curriculum is not well planned. This includes the curriculum in the early years. This leaves pupils with significant gaps in their knowledge. Leaders must develop whole-school plans which map out the curriculum more coherently. Plans must make clear leaders' ambition for what pupils will know by the end of a unit or topic. Leaders should sequence pupils' learning logically within topics, within year groups, across year groups and across subjects to ensure that pupils build their knowledge to achieve increasingly complex goals. In implementing their plans, leaders should check whether teachers have the subject knowledge to deliver each subject. They should also check that pupils become fully engaged in their learning.
- In the early years, children have too few opportunities to practise and consolidate their reading, writing and mathematics knowledge. This means that children do not remember new learning as well as they should. Additionally, adult demonstrations and questioning are not consistently effective. This hampers children's progress. Leaders should ensure that well-designed, enticing and demanding activities are on offer for children in independent and child-initiated learning. Leaders should also make sure that staff are effective in supporting and extending children's learning.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent from school. This has a detrimental effect on their learning. Leaders should continue to develop their approach to ensure they are effective in reducing rates of absence. They should continue to work with parents and other agencies to address this.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	143863
Local authority	York
Inspection number	10121662
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Hattam
Headteacher	Helen Coles
Website	www.stlawrencesschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in February 2017 and is a part of the Pathfinder Multi-Academy Trust. The predecessor school, Saint Lawrence's C of E VA Primary School, was last inspected in June 2016. It was judged inadequate, requiring special measures to improve.
- Just over a third of pupils are disadvantaged. This is above average.
- Just over a fifth are pupils with SEND. This is above average.
- Pupils represent 11 different ethnic groups. The largest group, approximately two thirds of pupils, are of White British heritage. Approximately 8% of pupils are of White Romany or Gypsy heritage.
- The school is designated as having a Church of England character. It is a part of the Diocese of York. It has not been inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and is due for inspection this term.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff.

As lead inspector, I met with trust representatives, including the chief executive officer and the chair of the trust. I also met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. We also met with the assistant director of the diocese and local authority representatives.

- We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at breakfast club, playtimes and lunchtimes. We gathered pupils' views about the school through formal and informal discussions. We considered 90 responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey and 17 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- We scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, records of governors' work and safeguarding documents. We also evaluated information relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- We gathered the views of parents at the start of the day. We considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's parents' questionnaire, Parent View, along with the 12 free-text responses.
- We looked in-depth at the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science and physical education. In doing so, we visited every class and reviewed pupils' work. We spoke to pupils about their learning and listened to them read. We also met with teachers.

Inspection team

Karine Hendley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Darren Marks

Ofsted Inspector

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