

# Inspection of a good school: St Leonard's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Tunstall Village Road, Silksworth, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR3 2BB

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Inspection dates:

28–29 January 2020

## Outcome

St Leonard's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

## What is it like to attend this school?

This friendly, inclusive school has been through a difficult time. There have been many changes in leadership and staffing since the last inspection. This turbulence has affected the quality of education. Leaders know that the curriculum is not well planned in subjects such as science and mathematics. Also, there is variability in the quality of phonics teaching.

The new headteacher has worked successfully with the deputy headteacher to create a strong staff team. There is a shared commitment to improve the school. Leaders and staff have high aspirations and ambitions for pupils. They want to give every pupil the best possible start to their education. Leaders' vision to 'learn, grow and shine' is at the heart of the school's work.

I saw good behaviour in lessons and around school. The new behaviour policy has supported a consistent approach across the school. Leaders use exclusions as a last resort. Most pupils and parents and carers say that behaviour has improved over time. Pupils know what bullying is. They say that adults help them when they have concerns.

Pupils enjoy strong relationships with the adults who teach them. Pupils are proud of their responsibilities, such as those of house captains, school council members and buddies. Pupils say they enjoy school. They take part in a wide range of sporting and musical activities.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is now broad and interesting. Together, staff have mapped out their intentions for developing the curriculum. In history, this work is well on its way. The history curriculum is well planned. Leaders and staff have thought carefully about the knowledge they want pupils to learn. In history, staff plan and sequence pupils' learning well. Leaders check to ensure that the history curriculum is being delivered effectively. The headteacher has plans in place to develop other subjects in this way.

Some subject leaders are new to their roles. These new leaders are keen to help improve the school. They recognise the importance of developing their leadership skills. They are keen to develop their subjects further. The headteacher has already started to provide training to support them in their roles.

The teaching of reading is central to the school's work. All staff promote a love of reading. During the inspection, pupils enjoyed meeting their secret reader, Monty the dog. Teachers read regularly with pupils. Staff encourage pupils to read on a regular basis. The books pupils read are carefully matched to the sounds and words they are learning. The new reading scheme, in key stage 2, is proving popular with pupils and staff alike. Leaders have recognised that there needs to be a wider range of books available within this scheme. At times, pupils are unable to select a book that matches their reading ability and interests.

There are some very strong examples of phonics teaching, but this is not consistent across the school. Some adults' knowledge of phonics is not secure. Some staff do not pronounce sounds accurately. These staff members do not correct pupils when they are making mistakes. The headteacher recognises that some staff need more training to develop their skills.

Pupils enjoy mathematics and they work confidently with number. Teachers give pupils lots of opportunities to apply their arithmetic to help them solve problems. However, in some year groups, the most able pupils say that their number work is too easy.

When I was talking with pupils and looking through their maths books, it was clear that measure, geometry and statistics are not well planned. Pupils are unable to remember what they have learned in these areas. The curriculum design of mathematics does not provide pupils with enough opportunities to revisit learning in these areas.

Children in early years get off to a positive start with their learning. Staff ensure that activities stimulate children's interest. Children enjoy listening to and repeating familiar stories. The environment is well organised and resourced. Children are confident learners.

Leaders are working hard to increase pupils' attendance. Their actions have led to improvement in the attendance of some pupils. Leaders know that they have more work to do.

Staff told me how much they like working at this school. They feel appreciated by leaders. They work well together and willingly help each other. They appreciate the training they receive and feel supported by leaders. Staff morale is positive.

Many governors are new to the school and new to their roles. They support leaders well and are keen to help to improve the school. Leaders and governors value the support they receive from the local authority and diocese.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. There are effective procedures in place to keep pupils safe and secure. Records are carefully organised and enable information to be shared quickly with external agencies should the need arise. This allows leaders to ensure that pupils get the right support from outside agencies at the right time.

Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. As a result, they have a clear understanding of their role in keeping pupils safe. Staff and governors care deeply about pupils' well-being. Pupils say they feel safe and if they have concerns, staff deal with them quickly and effectively.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The curriculum is not coherently planned in subjects other than English and history. This means that pupils do not have the chance to use their previous learning as a basis for new and future learning. Leaders recognise the need to strengthen the curriculum. They have high-quality plans in place to support this improvement. Subject leaders are new to their roles. Some are in the early stages of their leadership development. Senior leaders are providing training for these staff members to help them develop and implement these curriculum documents. Senior leaders should continue their work to ensure that plans are developed and implemented effectively.
- There is some variability in the teaching of phonics across the school. Some pupils are not given the precise help they need. Leaders need to ensure that there is appropriate training in place so that all adults are confident in teaching phonics. This will strengthen the phonics programme so that all pupils learn their sounds quickly and confidently.
- In key stage 2, there are insufficient reading books. This means that some pupils are unable to read texts that match their reading ability or interests. Leaders have identified that additional reading books need to be purchased as a matter of urgency.
- In mathematics, some teachers are not assessing pupils' knowledge well enough. At times, work is not always matched well to pupils' abilities. Those pupils who quickly grasp new concepts are not always provided with demanding work. Teachers should

ensure that the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently in mathematics so that they deepen their mathematical understanding. The current mathematics curriculum does not allow pupils to revisit knowledge in areas such as measure, geometry and statistics regularly. This means that pupils find it difficult to recall their previous learning. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum plans are refined. This will allow teachers to revisit this knowledge more frequently so that pupils remember the content and skills they have been taught.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2015.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	108846
<b>Local authority</b>	Sunderland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10131473
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	160
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Mrs C Lynch
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S Robertson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stleonardsprimary.org.uk">www.stleonardsprimary.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21–22 October 2015

## Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post on 1 June 2019.
- The school provides a breakfast club each day for its pupils.
- The school receives support from the local authority through regular visits.

## Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and other staff members. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met two representatives of the local authority and spoke to a member of the diocese.
- I considered the school's three surveys of the views of pupils, parents and staff. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. I viewed the information posted on the school's website and social media accounts. I also looked at information relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- I gathered pupils' views about the school through formal and informal discussion, including with representatives from the school council.

- I checked the school's single central register, spoke with the designated safeguarding lead and checked policies and records relating to safeguarding. I also spoke with pupils and staff about safeguarding procedures within school.
- I looked in depth at the following subjects: reading, mathematics and history. This included discussions with leaders of the subjects, visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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