

Inspection of a good school: St Laurence Church Junior School

Bunbury Road, Northfield, Birmingham, West Midlands B31 2DJ

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 February 2024

Outcome

St Laurence Church Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is much that is unique about St Laurence Church Junior School. From the long-established residential trip to York, to the charity work done as part of the Lenten Project, the school's vision statement 'Learning, loving and sharing, guided by Jesus' shines through. Pupils become confident, independent learners who are well prepared for their move to secondary school.

Pupils love their school and thrive. They achieve well across the school's broad curriculum because teachers have high expectations. Pupils work hard, do their best and are kind, considerate and thoughtful towards others. They become skilled mathematicians, enthusiastic readers, confident musicians and speakers of French. Pupils relish and benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These include an active choir, many sporting activities and gardening, French and art clubs.

Pupils feel safe and happy at school. Behaviour is typically positive, but pupils say that the behaviour of some pupils is not as good as they would like it to be. They say that staff are always good at dealing with any poor behaviour when it happens and that they like the new behaviour and relationships policy. Bullying is rare at this school and is dealt with quickly if it happens.

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

The school has put together an inspiring curriculum that enthuses pupils to want to learn more. Leaders have carefully sequenced learning so that pupils can build on what they already know. Usually, this results in pupils gaining a deeper understanding of the subjects they learn. Teachers refer regularly to learning from previous lessons and this helps pupils develop their understanding. Teachers organise mathematics lessons so that pupils are frequently discussing their reasoning with others. Pupils become skilled at explaining their mathematical thinking and this helps them to secure their understanding.

Teachers are skilled at presenting information and asking questions that help pupils deepen their understanding. Pupils acquire subject-specific vocabulary and use it with confidence, because teachers model this precisely themselves. However, sometimes the information teachers share is too complex or the tasks they ask pupils to do are too difficult. When this happens, pupils do not gain what is intended from these learning experiences, and they become confused.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly by staff. They are well supported by a knowledgeable special educational needs and disabilities coordinator to put in place adaptations so they can access the curriculum. Pupils with SEND mostly achieve well and staff closely monitor how well they are doing. Some pupils, including some who have SEND, struggle to maintain the high standards of behaviour the school expects. This sometimes results in disruption to the learning of others. Previously, the number of suspensions had been high. However, the number of suspensions has reduced since the introduction of a new behaviour and relationships policy.

Reading is always on the agenda and pupils are thoroughly immersed in a world of literature. Pupils joining Year 3 who have fallen behind with their reading are quickly helped to catch up. Skilled staff work with these pupils daily to help them build their phonics knowledge and become fluent readers.

Pupils take advantage of the wide array of personal development opportunities on offer. These are numerous and well considered. Pupils learn about the different ways in which people live, their faiths and cultures. They understand the importance of equality and acceptance. Pupils at this school are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils make a positive contribution to school and the wider world. Whether it is being a music councillor, a house captain or a prayer leader, pupils relish the leadership roles they take on and carry them out with gusto. They choose charities to support and use their entrepreneurial skills to raise money through the school's Lenten Project. They were proud to tell the inspector that they are currently raising money for Birmingham Children's Hospital.

The school is forward-thinking and perpetually looking to improve. It is well supported by governors who are knowledgeable and well informed. Together, they put in place strategic plans that are proving effective in driving improvement. Governors and leaders are outward-looking and respond well to quality assurance and guidance from local and national bodies. Leaders know the school very well and are clear about what they can change to make St Laurence Church Junior School even better in the future.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, the school does not ensure that learning is broken down into small enough, manageable steps for pupils. This means that some tasks are too complicated for pupils to understand and gain new knowledge. This slows their learning. The school should enable teachers to provide learning experiences that build carefully on pupils' prior learning so that they achieve success in tasks and make good progress.
- Though improving, the behaviour of some pupils, including some with SEND, is not as positive as it could be. As a result, due to some poor behaviour, they are distracted and miss valuable learning. The school should embed the new behaviour and relationships policy so that incidences of poor behaviour are reduced further and learning time is maximised.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2014.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium](#)

funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	103416
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10294482
Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jillian Saunders
Headteacher	Andrew Murphy
Website	www.stlaurencechurchjuniorschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school manages before- and after-school care.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is subject to inspections under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The school was inspected in May 2017. The next inspection will be within five years of the last section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other leaders and members of the governing body.
- The inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parents and carers' free-text responses. The inspector also took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons at different times of the day, including in assembly. He spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents and the school's website.
- The inspectors spoke to parents at the school gate.

Inspection team

Gareth Morgan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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