

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Barnstaple

Chanters Hill, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 8DN

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is not consistently good in reading, writing or mathematics.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are not achieving the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. This results in uneven rates of progress as pupils move through the school.
- Subject leaders who are new to post have not yet had the opportunity to drive forward improvements.
- School development plans do not focus well enough on securing good progress for pupils.
- Activities planned do not help pupils to practise and develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills across a range of subjects.
- Teachers' questioning does not sufficiently check pupils' understanding or deepen their thinking.
- Teaching assistants are not consistently used well enough to support learning.
- Pupils do not have a good enough understanding of what it means to live in modern Britain.

The school has the following strengths

- The leadership of the principal is good. He inspires and leads the staff effectively, aiming for rapid improvement of the school.
- Leaders have effective plans in place intended to improve the school quickly. However, many of the initiatives are very recent and are not yet fully embedded.
- Arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe are good. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils thrive in a nurturing environment which helps them to develop positive attitudes to their learning.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and well mannered, and demonstrate mutual respect for each other and adults.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. They are taught well and make good progress from their starting points.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring that all groups of pupils make good progress, as a result of teaching that:
 - has the highest expectations of all pupils
 - enables pupils to practise and develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills further across a wider range of subjects
 - provides the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, with activities that engage and challenge them to deepen and extend their learning so they achieve greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics
 - uses questioning more effectively to check pupils' understanding and make them think more deeply
 - deploys teaching assistants more effectively to support pupils' learning.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - development plans set clear targets which focus on pupils' progress and include more precise checks, with governors, on what is working well and why
 - subject leaders increase the impact of their monitoring in order to drive forward improvements
 - ensuring that the inconsistencies in teaching across the school are eradicated
 - leaders provide opportunities for teachers to share good practice across the school
 - pupils have a greater understanding of what it is like to live in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal and senior leaders are ambitious to ensure that Our Lady's Catholic Primary School provides the very best education for the pupils it serves. They are determined that the school will rapidly make the changes needed to become securely good.
- The leadership team has wasted no time in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school with plans in place to quickly tackle areas for improvement. However, many of the initiatives are very recent and are not yet fully embedded.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable about the areas they lead. They are keen to play an active role in the school's journey of improvement. Some are yet to have a full impact in their areas of responsibility as they are new in post. They are not yet fully involved in a cycle of monitoring activities, where findings drive rapid improvements.
- Leaders are ably supported by staff who share their drive and enthusiasm. The sense of everyone working as a team for the benefit of the pupils is palpable. Staff support the direction set by senior leaders, feel respected and valued, and are proud to be a member of the team. Staff typically commented, 'It is an amazing place to work, a pleasure to work for leaders with whom we can put our trust.'
- The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects and recently introduced topics are gaining greater interest from pupils. This is having a positive impact on pupils' attendance and enjoyment of learning. For example, pupils in Year 3 are currently enjoying their work on volcanoes. They were eager to share their knowledge and understanding with inspectors, ably describing the impact on the environment when a volcano erupts.
- The school is clear and precise in how it uses additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils who benefit from this funding are supported through programmes of intervention and there is some evidence that these pupils are quickly making gains in their learning. However, the impact of intervention work is not consistent and further improvement is required, especially for the most able disadvantaged in mathematics.
- The school makes good use of the additional funding for physical education and sport. Pupils have access to a broad range of sporting activities which include athletics, swimming and football. They are also able to participate in extra-curricular activities such as karate which are well attended. These activities provide pupils with the opportunity to take part in team sports, developing their social skills while increasing their level of fitness. The most able pupils are provided with opportunities to participate in events provided by the local sports partnership to further develop their skills. For example, during the inspection, a group of pupils attended an athletics event and were very proud of their achievements.

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded carefully throughout the curriculum. Pupils are mindful of the school's Christian values and the culture that leaders and staff want to create in the school to help them to be successful learners. Staff show pupils, through their own actions and manner, what it is to get along together happily in a school community. This was exemplified during the inspection from the very moment inspectors walked through the door, with the warm welcome provided, initially by members of the office team. Parents typically spoke about the ethos of the school and confirmed this positive impression. In this way, pupils are encouraged to play their part, developing the social skills and attributes which are necessary for tolerance and understanding of other people's differences. For example, pupils describe how the school teaches them that it is 'good to be different'.
- Pupils' awareness of what it means to live in modern Britain is limited. For example, while they understand the idea of democracy through the school council election process, this is not secure. They were not as confident when articulating how to protect themselves well enough from being drawn into things, now or in the future, that may cause harm to themselves or others.
- The school's capacity for further improvement is good. Leaders' evaluation of its performance is accurate. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are taking action to tackle the weaknesses they have identified quickly. However, leaders do not check often enough the impact of their actions to ensure that pupils, especially groups of pupils such as the most able, are making the best progress.
- Until very recently, the multi-academy trust has not played an effective role in supporting or holding the school to account for the progress pupils are making. Consequently, despite the drive for improvement from leaders, they have not received the support they need to improve the school to ensure that it is securely good.

Governance

- The local board of governors is knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There are some well-established systems and structures in place to allow them to effectively carry out their roles. Governors are increasingly providing leaders with a good balance of challenge and support. A range of information is used to check on improvements. However, findings do not always get to the heart of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Record-keeping is well maintained and meets all current requirements. There is a strong culture of safeguarding that permeates the school. The shared understanding by all staff, whatever their role, helps protect pupils against possible risks. Staff know pupils extremely well and remain vigilant, especially towards those pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. Staff receive high-quality training and are experienced in dealing with complex issues. Support for vulnerable pupils is highly detailed and personalised. Leaders are 'terrier like', leaving no stone unturned, to ensure that pupils get the best support and guidance from outside agencies in time of crisis in order to minimise risk to their safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to enable pupils to make securely good progress regardless of their starting point or ability.
- Pupils' books across a range of subjects show some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations which is resulting in uneven rates of progress. Work is not consistently pitched at the right level for pupils, especially for the most able. Work pupils complete is often too easy and pupils are not being sufficiently challenged to secure greater depth in their learning.
- Teachers do not always use their strong knowledge of pupils to ensure that planned activities enable pupils to make the very best progress, lesson by lesson and day by day.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge but this is not always used effectively. For example, some teachers do not use questioning well enough to probe pupils' understanding and deepen their learning.
- Teachers know which pupils need to catch up quickly but it is only recently that identification and provision have been improved for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have significantly improved the school's approach and staff have an increased awareness and understanding of these pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils are now receiving much more specific and targeted support to meet their needs but this has only been the case in recent months. While there is increasing evidence that they are moving ahead much more quickly, for example in reading, it is too early to see the impact of the changes on their progress over time.
- Teaching assistants work closely alongside teachers and have good relationships with pupils. However, there are occasions when they are much less involved and sit and watch the teacher, rather than looking out for opportunities to support learning.
- Changes in how different subjects are taught are having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. For example, the school became a museum where each year group learned about different periods in history, including the Tudors and Britain since the 1940s. This approach ignited pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning, resulting in some high-quality work.
- Teachers respond well to feedback and guidance offered by leaders. They are committed and demonstrate a determination and eagerness to improve their practice further. Parents spoken to recognise these positive features and appreciate the work teachers do to support their children.
- There is evidence that there is good teaching in the school and that the quality of teaching is improving quickly. This is resulting in some pupils making good progress over time but this is not the norm, meaning that pupils' progress is not yet consistently good across a range of subjects including reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The care and support the school provides to pupils are significant strengths. Staff know each individual pupil extremely well and a wide range of support is available should they need it. For example, a therapy dog is used to provide comfort and support to pupils who are facing challenges in their lives.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. These positive relationships are built on trust and mutual respect. Pupils describe how they appreciate all that staff do for them. They feel well looked after and are confident they can share their worries or concerns with any member of staff, knowing they will be listened to and well supported.
- The school works effectively with outside agencies to maintain pupils' safety and well-being. Leaders are relentless and uncompromising in seeking out specialist assistance to ensure that pupils receive good-quality care, guidance and support.
- Pupils describe how they feel safe. The school provides them with a range of activities which teach them how to keep safe. For example, older pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using electronic devices such as mobile phones or the internet. They are confident in the action to take and the importance of not sharing personal information. Parents also welcome the guidance they receive to keep their children safe, for example on e-safety.
- Pupils can explain how to keep themselves healthy, including through healthy eating and physical exercise. Sport plays a significant part in the life of the school. The sport premium is used effectively contributing to the increasing number of pupils participating in a range of sporting activities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils of all ages show they have a good understanding of what is acceptable behaviour and the differences between right and wrong.
- Pupils behave well during the school day, including at break and lunchtime. As they move around the school, most pupils are orderly and calm. They are polite and well mannered, readily opening the doors for visitors.
- Pupils say that any incidents of bullying are rare. Records show that any occurrences are dealt with quickly and effectively. The logs for behaviour show that incidents are carefully recorded and swiftly tackled. A close working relationship with parents and effective partnerships with outside agencies act as strong supports for pupils with identified behavioural and emotional needs.
- School leaders' work to improve pupils' attendance and reduce rates of persistent absence is proving successful. Consequently, attendance rates continue to rise and are in line with the national average. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that there will always be work to be done in this area, and work closely with others including the parent support adviser to promote regular attendance.

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is typically good. However, on rare occasions, there is low-level disruption, especially when pupils are not excited or motivated to concentrate on their work. This results in pupils' rates of progress slowing and they do not achieve as well as they should.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is not consistently good. Current standards across the school confirm that pupils do not achieve standards that are expected for their age across year groups and in subjects including reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence in books shows that there is still work to be done in order for pupils to quickly catch up.
- Systems for monitoring outcomes do not take into account well enough the progress pupils make from their starting points. Consequently, leaders do not have the information they need to check how much progress pupils and groups of pupils make.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough to enable them to secure the best possible progress. This is especially so for the most able pupils who do not consistently achieve the high standards of which they are capable.
- The number of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check remains above the national average. Their ability in phonics has a positive impact on their writing. Pupils practise their writing skills across a range of subjects. This helps them to develop their style of writing. However, teachers' expectations differ in how pupils can and should develop and extend their skills in writing. This leads to uneven rates of progress.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to mathematics as a result of changes made by leaders in the approach to the teaching of this subject. Nevertheless, pupils are not able to demonstrate with confidence how they can apply the formal calculation skills they have learned in broader aspects of mathematics. This includes using their knowledge of number to solve problems.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making stronger progress in their reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers carefully plan targeted activities which are more precisely meeting pupils' needs. However, many of these interventions are too recent to have noticeably diminished the differences when compared with other pupils.
- Leaders have put into place extra help to boost pupils' progress and to help them develop further their knowledge and understanding of key skills. However, it is too early to see the full impact in securing consistently strong progress for pupils across year groups and in a range of subjects.

Early years provision

Good

- The school provides good early years provision. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development (the standard expected by the end of Reception) continues to rise and remains well above the national average. A high proportion of children are currently on track to reach a good level of development in 2017. This ensures that children are well prepared as they move into Year 1.

- The leadership of the early years is good. Staff have a good understanding of what the children can and cannot do. They carefully analyse assessment information to check how well children are doing and to ensure that they are making good progress across all areas of learning. For example, the leader is aware of the difference in achievement between boys and girls when they arrive in school. Activities are carefully planned to ensure that they excite and engage boys. Recent work on superheroes and a topic on the history of toys has brought learning alive for both boys and girls. Consequently, differences between boys' and girls' achievement are diminishing quickly.
- Good use is made of an electronic programme to record children's individual achievements. The information gained from this is used successfully to inform future learning sessions to meet the needs of children.
- Disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in their learning and achieve well. As a result of good teaching, these children are on track to achieve a good level of development in 2017.
- The teaching of phonics is good, enabling children to make strong progress. The most able children are able to use this knowledge to read and write simple sentences. However, at times, activities planned do not extend children's learning when writing, which hampers their progress.
- Relationships between staff and children are strong. This enables children to thrive and develop in an environment where they feel safe and secure.
- Behaviour is good. Routines are well established and consistently applied by staff. Children quickly develop good relationships with staff and each other. They work and play happily together both inside and outside.
- The safety of children is good. Staff are appropriately trained in all aspects of safeguarding and are confident in the action to take if they spot any concerns.
- Parents are positive about the start their children have in school. They appreciate the good level of communication between home and school, allowing them to support their children with their learning effectively.

School details

Unique reference number	140739
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10024953

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Sandy Anderson
Principal	Rob Meech
Telephone number	01271 345 164
Website	www.ourladys.devon.sch.uk
Email address	principal@olcs.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Our Lady's Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school and is part of the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust. The trust was formed in April 2014. Its work is overseen by a board of directors. The trust is responsible for one nursery, one first school, 32 primary schools and two secondary schools across seven local authorities in the south-west region.
- The school joined the trust and became an academy on 1 April 2014. When its predecessor school, Our Lady's Catholic School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The current leadership team was established in September 2016.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, additional government money to support pupils in local authority care and those eligible for free school meals, is similar to the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- Children in the early years are taught in one class and attend full time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons or part-lessons, some of which were joint observations with leaders.
- Meetings were held with leaders, staff, governors and the central area adviser from the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised during the inspection, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements and attendance information.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work, together with senior leaders, to establish the current quality of pupils' work and progress over time.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils to seek their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors spoke to parents informally at the start of the day and also considered the 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peta Dyke	Ofsted Inspector
Craig Hayes	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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