

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Marston Road, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 3BT

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2019

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

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 dropped to below average in 2018. Standards are now rising, but current pupils are doing better in English than in mathematics.
- While curriculum planning, subject leadership and assessment are improving, some teaching does not cover all the necessary ground.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics requires improvement. Currently, teaching does not build securely on pupils' previous learning.
- In mathematics, pupils' mistakes are not picked up quickly by staff. At other times, the most able pupils do not press on with new work when they are ready for it.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting is very mixed. In part, this is because the teaching of correct letter formation in the early part of the school has been rather hit or miss. In addition, some resources are not ideal.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching in English is good. Leaders' and teachers' successful work to raise standards in reading and writing means that most pupils are doing well. They take pride in the content of their written work and enjoy many opportunities to read in school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They work hard in class and are polite and respectful to others. Conflict or upset are rare and pupils feel safe in school.
- Early years provision is effective. Good leadership and teaching help children to settle in quickly and enjoy school.
- Directors, governors and leaders have an excellent understanding of their roles. They have put effective routines in place to strengthen teaching, improve the curriculum and boost pupils' progress. Everyone in the school community says that they feel supported in their work and that the school is on an upward journey.
- The interim headteacher inspires trust and is a very visible and authoritative presence in the school. Through their words and actions, she and other leaders uphold the school's values and communicate ambition for the school to improve.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning in mathematics in order to raise standards across the school, by:
 - continuing to improve assessment and curriculum planning, so that teaching builds securely on what pupils already know
 - improving the teaching of reasoning
 - making sure that the most able pupils are given suitably challenging work when they are ready for it
 - making sure that staff pick up quickly on pupils' mistakes and misconceptions and adapt their teaching to address any misunderstandings.
- Build on the strengths in early years provision, by:
 - giving children more attentive guidance when teaching early letter formation and writing
 - improving resources and giving staff more opportunities to learn from highly effective practice.
- Continue to improve the impact of leadership and management on teaching and learning, by:
 - further strengthening subject leadership, especially in mathematics
 - making sure that the curriculum provides a suitable progression of learning in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the school joined the Painsley Catholic Academy, the pace of school improvement has increased significantly. Senior leaders have been quick to get to grips with what needs to be done to improve teaching and lift standards. Already, improvements to assessment, the teaching of English and the approach to managing pupils' behaviour and safety have demonstrated the efficiency, capability and ambition of leadership at this school.
- Currently, the school is led by an interim headteacher who is doing a sterling job. She brings a morale-boosting and authoritative confidence to the role, which is successfully bringing out the best in others. Leaders responsible for different subjects or aspects of the school are pressing forward with projects to strengthen teaching. They have led training for staff and are working with other schools to share ideas and make sure that staff see and learn from effective practice. To date, the leadership of English and special educational needs has had more impact than the leadership of mathematics.
- Leaders are making necessary changes to the curriculum to ensure that pupils are taught what they need to know in different subjects. So far, this work is further ahead in some subjects than others. The speed and integrity of the improvements made to the English curriculum, however, indicate that leaders are likely to be just as successful in shaping up the teaching of mathematics. Other subjects are taught regularly, and staff have clear plans to guide them, although inspection evidence suggests that there is scope to provide more opportunities for art and design technology.
- The school clearly proclaims the values that guide its mission. These shine out from the school's website and from displays that colour the entrance area. These values, which derive from Catholic virtues and include respect, truth, love and service, are exemplified by staff in what they say and do. During their time at school, pupils learn how these values can steer and comfort them in their lives and help them to grow into compassionate and responsible members of society.
- Pupil premium, special educational needs funds and the primary school physical education and sport funding are spent appropriately. Leaders keep an increasingly watchful eye on the difference their decisions and spending make to pupils' achievement and enjoyment at school.
- Parents and carers are supportive of the school. They appreciate the advice and information provided by staff and say that their children are happy to come to school. Parents express confidence in the school's leadership and believe that the school is heading in the right direction. Inspection findings support these views.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. The leadership provided by the local governing body, the directors and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Painsley Catholic Academy inspires well-founded confidence. Roles and responsibilities are set out with clear precision and adhered to without fail. Governors and directors receive all the information they need at the right time and in the right way. They are ambitious for

the school to be a good or better school and, to this end, provide appropriate support and challenge to the school's leadership. The CEO has his finger on the pulse and a proven ability to bring about positive changes quickly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- In November 2018, the school's leaders commissioned a full audit of safeguarding at the school. This comprehensive check on safety arrangements led to a series of successful actions to strengthen the school's work in this area.
- Staff training is up to date and staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's safety. When necessary, they are quick to act and information is passed to the right people in the right way. All the required checks on employees and visitors are carried out and recorded correctly.
- Pupils, too, know what to do if they have a problem or worry. Visiting speakers and lessons in school teach them how to look after themselves in different situations. Pupils and parents are confident that any bullying, if it happened at school, would be stopped.
- Medicines in school are stored in the right places. Any playground accidents are attended to promptly and without fuss. The school site is kept secure during the day.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Mathematics teaching requires improvement. In this subject, teaching has not enabled pupils to develop the knowledge and understanding they need before moving on to secondary school.
- Over time, teaching has required pupils to complete tasks, but has not helped them to develop a secure understanding of mathematical concepts. Furthermore, content has not been taught in a logical sequence, so pupils have gaps in their knowledge and make mistakes that teachers do not expect. Alternatively, some pupils find new work very easy because it doesn't build further on what they have already shown they understand and can do.
- During this inspection, for example, key stage 1 pupils had very recently completed work that was much easier than work they had managed with success in the previous term. Further up the school, the level of challenge given to older pupils was wide of the mark. For some, work was beyond their current level of understanding, while the most able pupils breezed through their activities quickly and easily. For all pupils, teaching does not focus enough on developing their reasoning skills.
- Staff and leaders are alert to these problems, and training, guidance and new resources are being put in place. A new assessment system has been introduced and this is being used with increasing reliability to find out what pupils do and do not know. This is a step in the right direction and mathematics teaching is improving. However, there is still more to do to make sure that teaching covers all the necessary ground in the right order.

- On the other hand, teaching in English is good. Teachers provide pupils with meaningful reasons to write and pupils can express their ideas with well-chosen words that they put together well. In Year 6, for instance, teaching used imaginative prompts that steered pupils to apply what they had learned about different types of writing. In response, pupils produced good-quality, lengthy pieces of fictional writing. They demonstrated an ability to edit and improve their work and used punctuation with care and accuracy. Around the school, examples of well-crafted writing about a range of subjects are on display. This serves to celebrate pupils' achievements and reinforce high expectations. That said, the quality of handwriting varies. Some is well formed, clear, joined and neat; some is not.
- Reading, too, is taught well. Regular phonics teaching is pitched correctly, gets pupils actively engaged in learning and moves on at an appropriate and well-informed pace. Each day, pupils learn a little bit more and enjoy reading and being read to by adults.
- In other subjects, teaching holds pupils' interest and keeps them busy. During this inspection, there was some very effective teaching in gymnastics. In addition, pupils' work in science and religious education shows that they are required to think deeply, both when considering scientific evidence and when reflecting on matters of faith.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- St Patrick's Catholic Primary is a very welcoming school where staff go out of their way to let pupils know they are valued. Pupils are encouraged to do their best, help others and to seek help when they need it. They know that adults will always have time to talk with them about their interests and to listen to any worries they might have.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and supervisory staff all show care and concern for pupils' well-being and apply school policies with consistency. A breaktime 'drop-in' zone run by a teaching assistant provides a safe haven for pupils who need a quiet space or time to talk. On top of this, adults routinely lead breaktime games with pupils, and their relaxed, good-natured, kindly authority helps pupils to feel good about themselves.
- While aspects of the academic curriculum have not been well honed to pupils' needs, attention to their emotional well-being has been a consistent feature of the school. Pupils, parents and staff are confident that the school is a safe and secure place in which to work and learn. Inspection evidence supports this view.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their conduct in lessons and when moving around the school is calm and orderly. On the playground, they get along with one another and upsets or conflict are rare. When any problems do occur, adults are quick to help. In addition, older pupils act as buddies to younger pupils and look out for them at breaktimes and make sure they are okay in school.

- Pupils remember to be polite and have good manners. They routinely step aside to let others through doorways and offer courteous and cheery greetings to visitors.
- Most of the time, pupils listen when adults are speaking in class. On occasions, and more noticeably towards the end of the day, some pupils get a bit restless and fidgety and teachers have to remind them to pay attention.
- Attendance is in line with the rates seen in most other schools and pupils usually arrive on time and in full school uniform.
- Pupils, staff and parents all report that behaviour has recently improved because expectations have risen. Pupils know that bullying of any sort will not be tolerated. They say that good behaviour is noticed and rewarded and that the school's rules are fair. Exclusion from school is rare, but it has been used when necessary.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2018, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 fell to below average. Pupils' progress rates also slipped, with progress in English presenting a stronger picture than in mathematics.
- For current pupils, their progress and attainment in mathematics continue to be behind those seen in reading and writing. There are two main reasons for this. First, curriculum planning in mathematics has not covered all the primary school content. Second, over time, new teaching has not built logically or securely on pupils' previous learning. These shortcomings have left pupils with gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The situation is now improving, as curriculum planning and assessment strengthen. However, inspectors' checks on pupils' work, observations in class and conversations with pupils and teachers revealed that pupils continue to make erratic progress in mathematics.
- In contrast to this, progress rates in reading and writing are good. Pupils have responded very well to a recent whole-school focus on improving the quality of their writing. In Year 6, the standard of written work shows that pupils are being well prepared for learning at secondary school. In addition, pupils' books show that new learning builds firmly on earlier learning. Similarly, pupils are supported and guided to become competent readers. Handwriting is somewhat mixed, with the causes of some poorly formed handwriting having their roots in the early part of the school.
- Like other pupils, the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils do better with their reading and writing than their mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) respond well to the school's increasingly effective support for their needs.
- Work and standards in other subjects present a mixed picture. For example, this inspection found limited evidence of design technology or artwork. On the other hand, the quality of work seen in science, religious education and physical education gave a very positive picture.

Early years provision

Good

- Good leadership is the driving factor behind the judgement of good early years provision. This inspection found that clear-sighted leadership and mostly effective teaching mean that children are happy and safe at school. They make good progress in most areas of learning. Even so, there is further work to be done to improve this part of the school.
- In both the Nursery and Reception classes, adults are kind to children and use lots of praise to reinforce expectations of good behaviour. Consequently, children grow in confidence and show kindness to others. Many classroom activities require children to cooperate, make choices and share. In doing so, they learn to get along with their peers and to be considerate and thoughtful.
- The classrooms and outdoor area are full of interesting things to do, although some of the equipment is rather worn or depleted. Nevertheless, simple and old resources are used well to stimulate discussion and imagination. Teaching builds on children's own interests and fascinations, with staff steering learning by asking thought-provoking questions. Furthermore, staff are quick to seize upon spontaneous moments, such as snow and ice on the playground, to make children pause and wonder about the world around them.
- Staff maintain good communication with parents. There are many opportunities for them to come into school to talk with staff and find out how their children are getting on. These positive relationships and flow of information between home and school help parents to support their children's learning at home.
- Many children start school with typical levels of knowledge, skills and pre-school experience. However, an increasing proportion start with limited spoken English and receive additional support in school to help them keep up. This works well and, by the end of Reception Year, the proportion reaching a good level of development is usually just above national figures. Often, children's early writing is a weaker aspect of learning. In particular, children are not given enough guidance about how to hold a pencil or form letters. This leads to some unhelpful habits that limit the quality of their handwriting in later years. As in the rest of the school, staff will continue to benefit from observing effective practice in this school and elsewhere.

School details

Unique reference number	142216
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10053435

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chief executive officer	Steve Bell
Headteacher	Catherine Williams
Telephone number	01785 413275
Website	www.st-patricksstafford.com
Email address	office@st-patricks-stafford.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a bit smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Approximately two thirds of pupils are White British. Just under one third of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is just below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average.
- In 2016, the school became an academy. In September 2018, the school joined the Painsley Catholic Academy, which is also known as Painsley Catholic Multi-academy Company (the MAC). The MAC's board of directors is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the MAC's school. They employ a chief executive officer to oversee and work with all the schools in the MAC. At a local level, a governing body oversees St Patrick's Catholic Primary School.

- Since November 2018, the school has been led by an interim headteacher. This arrangement is set to continue until a permanent headteacher is appointed.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2014.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Inspectors also examined pupils' work in books and on display, and considered school test and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's routines, at the beginning and end of the school day, in lessons, at lunch- and breaktimes, and when pupils were moving about the school site.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 70 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and 67 free-text responses. The inspection team considered these, spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and read an email from a parent. In addition, inspectors spoke with pupils, staff, school leaders, governors and the CEO, deputy CEO and directors of Painsley Catholic Academy to gather their views. Inspectors also looked at staff and pupils' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires.
- Inspectors examined school documents. These included information about pupils' progress and attainment, evaluations of the school's performance, and several policy statements. Records relating to leadership, governance, staff training, SEND, early years, behaviour, attendance, punctuality, exclusions, safety, safeguarding and the quality of teaching were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ellen Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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