

St Luke's Catholic Academy

Pyenest Road, Harlow, CM19 4LU

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders and managers, including governors, work closely with the other academy in the trust to drive up standards and improve the quality of teaching.
- Subject leaders keep a close check on the quality of pupils' learning and provide effective support to teachers.
- Teaching is good and is strongly improving. Teachers use the best practice from both schools within the partnership to improve their skills.
- The executive headteacher promotes high expectations of behaviour and learning across the school and, as a result, standards are rising. At the end of Year 6 in 2014, pupils reached standards that were in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. With very few exceptions, all groups of pupils have continued to achieve well subsequently.
- Teachers prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. There are regular visits to many places of interest to pupils and the curriculum makes a strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. Their behaviour is good and little time is wasted in lessons.
- Pupils say they feel safe and their parents agree. As a result, the school is a warm and harmonious community built around shared values.
- Children in the early years make good progress even though some have low levels of literacy skills when they arrive. They thrive in the warm and stimulating environment the setting provides.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Boys do not achieve as well as girls in reading and writing at Key Stage 1.
- Teachers do not provide enough support and guidance on how pupils can improve their spelling and reading comprehension skills, particularly in subjects such as history and geography.
- Teachers in Key Stage 2 do not always provide activities that challenge pupils sufficiently, including those who are the most able, or develop pupils' problem-solving and investigative skills to the full in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classrooms. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with the two deputy headteachers. Inspectors also made a number of other short visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, and looked at writing and mathematics work drawn from across the school, often in the company of subject leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and records on behaviour, safety and attendance. They also looked at information on individual pupils' progress and anonymised records of teachers' performance. They also reviewed records of meetings held by the governing body, the academy strategic board and the trustees.
- Inspectors met with pupils, interviewed a sample of staff and spoke to parents. They also spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors obtained the views of parents through the school's own surveys. There were not enough responses to the on-line Parent View survey to generate a valid picture of parents' views. Inspectors also considered written comments from 18 members of staff.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ken Parry

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Luke's Catholic Academy, which converted to become an academy on 1 September 2013, is part of the 'Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Multi Academy Trust' and is sponsored by St Alban's Catholic Academy in Harlow.
- Children in the Reception class attend full-time.
- St Luke's is smaller than the average primary school.
- Pupils come from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are White British followed by pupils of African heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- On becoming an academy the school appointed an executive headteacher, who also has this role at its partner school. The academy appointed two deputy headteachers in January 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment at Key Stage 1 so that boys' attainment at least matches national averages in reading and writing, by ensuring teachers and other adults help pupils:
 - refine their skills in phonics (letters and their sounds) so that they improve their reading comprehension skills and spelling
 - develop their writing skills by applying them more frequently in other subjects, such as history and geography.
- Improve teaching so that the progress of all pupils in mathematics accelerates, and especially that of the most able pupils, by:
 - providing more activities which challenge pupils and which help them extend their skills by developing their ability to solve problems and carry out mathematical investigations.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher, along with senior leaders and governors, is ambitious for the school and is determined to ensure pupils succeed. Staff share her high expectations so that pupils' behaviour is good, teaching is improving and standards are rising.
- The executive headteacher has helped to foster a strong culture of learning. This is built on a set of shared values which promote tolerance and respect. No form of discrimination is tolerated and all pupils enjoy the same good opportunities to succeed. The school makes every effort to meet the needs of all the pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Members of the board of governors and trustees hold leaders closely to account for the progress pupils make. Leaders in their turn make careful checks on staff performance so that pay awards reflect improvements in standards.
- Subject leaders for literacy and numeracy work effectively across both schools in the partnership to spread the best practice evident in each. They provide strong leadership which builds confidence in teachers, who readily ask for and get advice and support. They carry out careful checks on learning and make effective use of information on pupils' progress to plan activities alongside class teachers. As a result they make a strong contribution to raising standards.
- The school has secure and robust systems for safeguarding children. Staff and visitors are properly vetted, and access to the school is carefully checked. Policies are clear and comprehensive and fully reflect national guidance. Staff have up-to-date training and knowledge about how to recognise and to deal with any concerns regarding pupils' safety.
- The school's curriculum is based around topics which build on the natural links between different subjects very effectively. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The school takes every opportunity to extend pupils' learning outside the classroom by arranging educational visits to places of interest, often with pupils from their partner school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn to appreciate common British values through celebrations of national events such as 'Remembrance Day'. Occasions such as the Year 6 visit to the House of Commons and regular carol services at a local centre for disabled adults have helped to foster awareness of these values and promote respect and tolerance for others very well. The school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain very well.
- The school makes good use of the pupil premium fund to provide disadvantaged pupils with extra and effective support in class. This also ensures that these pupils play a full part in school life. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress and gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils are closing.
- The school makes excellent use of the primary sports fund. More pupils now take part in competitive sports, and this has resulted in many trophies for team sports. Sports coaches and specialist teaching provide a rich choice of different activities. 'Change for life' activities help those who are less interested in competitive sport, to enjoy sport and health related activities.
- The school works hard to involve parents in their children's learning. Parents are supportive of the school, though some expressed worries about changes in staff, especially at leadership level, which they thought was having an unsettling impact on their children's learning. Evidence from the inspection shows that, despite these changes, the school's effective leadership is continuing to secure considerable improvements in provision and in pupils' learning.
- The school works closely with its partner school in the trust to check and improve teaching, learning and leadership. It buys additional support from the local authority when required.

■ The governance of the school:

- The academy trust has ensured that governors are well equipped to hold school leaders to account for the school's performance. They share responsibility for governance across the two schools in the partnership and use their knowledge of how each is performing to bring improvements to both. As a result teaching in this school is improving.
- Governors are ably led by the Chair of the Governing Body, who holds this position in both schools. Governors are kept well informed by the executive headteacher, and this helps them to have an accurate appreciation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Governors have good links with different teachers and this helps them check on the school's progress in bringing about improvements in different subjects. They have a good understanding of how teaching is improving, the impact this is having on pupils' achievement, and know how progress and standards compare to those of other schools.
- Governors ensure that all their statutory responsibilities are fulfilled. Attendance at regular training keeps them up to date with requirements. Their annual check on safeguarding, for example, helps to ensure the school meets all requirements for checking on the suitability of staff and visitors and that pupils are safe.
- Governors are well informed about how pay awards are linked to pupils' progress, including the progress of disadvantaged pupils. This helps them to ensure that the school deals effectively with weaker teaching.
- Governors maintain an effective oversight of the school's finances so are able to check on the impact of funds such as the sports premium. They have made good decisions on how finances are used across the multi-academy trust to the benefit of pupils at St Luke's. They check the impact of their decisions carefully.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say they know the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. They respond well to adult advice, and show a good degree of care and responsibility for others and their environment.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and are enthusiastic learners. This contributes well to their good levels of achievement and creates a positive climate for learning across the school.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly over the last year. Only one pupil has been excluded in that time. Pupils show considerable respect towards adults, listen well in class and quickly follow instructions. They cooperate well together so little time is wasted. Staff manage incidents of unacceptable behaviour well.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for roles, such as helping out at lunchtimes, helping children in the Reception class, and representing the school at school council meetings. They are rightly proud of their school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are taught about basic safety measures, such as taking care on roads. They understand how to keep safe when using computers and mobile devices, and understand the dangers when talking to someone they don't know.
- Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils have a mature understanding of bullying, talk confidently about how to avoid this, and trust staff to handle fairly any minor disagreements. They understand how words can offend and say that for example racist bullying is not tolerated. As one said, 'It's wrong to judge a book by its cover'.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their attendance which is above the national average. Parents have no concerns about behaviour and agree that children are well looked after and kept safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because teachers and other adults manage behaviour well and plan activities which consistently engage pupils' interests.
- Teachers use every opportunity to encourage pupils to read. Teachers make good use of visits by authors and events such as 'World Book Day' to help pupils to value reading and to read for enjoyment, and to explore different story titles and themes. Standards in reading are rising as a result.
- Teachers and teaching assistants help pupils develop their phonic skills well by using well-planned activities to guide their understanding of the links between letters and sounds. Pupils become increasingly confident in using these skills to read unfamiliar words as they move through the school. However, teachers do not always spend enough time helping pupils improve their reading comprehension skills and spelling.
- The school has invested much time in improving writing. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and this helps pupils enjoy writing. Teachers' frequent feedback and marking ensure that pupils are rapidly improving their writing skills. For example, Year 1 pupils show considerable pride in their 'news writing' books as they corrected and improved their early writing. However, teachers do not always insist on pupils using their writing skills accurately when studying other subjects, such as history or geography, particularly at Key Stage 1.
- Teachers provide good support for pupils' calculation skills in mathematics so that they quickly become confident in using these skills in different contexts. Teachers provide well-organised and practical resources that have helped pupils in Year 2 develop secure multiplication skills and become confident when using mathematical language. However, not all teachers in Key Stage 2 plan sufficiently challenging activities or provide pupils with enough opportunities to extend their skills by undertaking mathematical investigations and problem-solving exercises. Sometimes this results in work which is too easy for pupils, including the most able pupils.
- Pupils benefit from the good teaching they receive from specialist teachers in sports and music. These teachers' subject knowledge is strong and helps pupils acquire new skills in incremental steps. For example, pupils in Year 2 were taught to use a wide range of apparatus to perform different gymnastic and other skills safely. Teaching frequently engages pupils' interests so that they all join in with enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This is often in small groups, or on a one-to-one basis, where the activities are carefully planned and help pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers make good use of visits to extend pupils' learning. Pupils in Year 3 for example enjoyed making pizzas at a local restaurant, as they learnt about how to combine different ingredients and how restaurants are organised. This helps learning to be both fun and interesting and helps increase pupils' progress.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good and standards are rising across the school. Although pupils' attainment in Year 2 in 2014 was below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics, they made good progress from their starting points in Year 1.
- In 2014, pupils reached standards in reading, writing and mathematics that were broadly in line with the national average by the end of Year 6.
- Although pupils in Year 1 attained below the national expectations in the phonics screening check in 2014,

standards are now rising.

- The school promotes pupils' love of reading effectively. Pupils read widely and for enjoyment and, as a result, reading outcomes are quickly improving. Standards in writing are also rising. However, boys do not achieve as well as girls in writing. The difference between the quality of girls' and boys' writing is particularly evident in their work in history and geography topics at Key Stage 1.
- There were too few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014 to comment on their achievement without identifying them. However, across the school they make progress in line with their peers in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. Teachers check their progress regularly and their effective small group and one-to-one support ensures that these pupils do not fall behind.
- The most able pupils achieve well. In 2014 they attained around the national averages at the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6, although at the end of Year 2, their attainment was below average. The school organises special activities outside the classroom so that demands made on the most able properly reflect their abilities. This helps their progress in mathematics. However, the mathematics work that teachers set in their mainstream classes does not always challenge the most able pupils sufficiently.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, as well as pupils from a Black African background, also achieve well. All pupils are made to feel part of the school, so no one is neglected. This confirms the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.

The early years provision is good

- Children's skills are typical for their age when they first enter Reception, though a few have weaker basic skills in communication and language. They make good progress thanks to the setting's warm, secure and vibrant environment that enables them to thrive. The proportions who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception year are around the national average. This prepares them well for the expectations of Year 1.
- Teaching is good. Teachers prepare well-planned activities which help children to focus and concentrate for extended periods. In one session, for example, some children were constructing a shelter for farm animals and, through good cooperation and resilience, they found ways to make it secure. Others used computers to research facts about farm animals to extend their understanding.
- There is a strong focus on developing children's language skills and vocabulary. This ensures that children quickly become confident in expressing ideas and opinions.
- Children take great pride in their learning. The records adults keep also show how effectively children are developing their understanding of number and new vocabulary. Teachers record their progress in acquiring new skills in journals, where they also keep a record of their progress in other subjects, including in religious education. The school encourages parents to be fully involved in their child's education and to contribute 'wow' moments when significant learning takes place at home.
- Children engage well in a wide range of stimulating activities. They cooperate and play well together, taking turns and listening to adult instructions. They are kept safe and, as a result, behave extremely well.
- Leaders in both early years' settings share expertise across the partnership so that leadership is good and provision is improving. Leaders have ensured that children are able to develop their physical skills well by establishing a richly-resourced outside area.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139577
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	449843

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Reynolds
Headteacher	Anne Marie McCann
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01279 423499
Fax number	01279 626674
Email address	admin@st-lukesrc.essex.sch.uk

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