

Inspection of St Leonard's Primary School

Fairway, Stafford ST16 3TW

Inspection dates:	5 and 6 November 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Leonard's are confident and happy. The school's core values of being responsible, reflective, respectful, caring, confident, and resilient citizens are promoted well and so have a positive impact on pupils. Pupils feel safe in school.

The school is aspirational for all pupils. Recent changes to the curriculum mean expectations for pupils' learning are rising. However, more work needs to be undertaken to improve parts of the curriculum. This means pupils sometimes do not learn as much in some subjects as they do in others.

Pupils show respect for one another; they behave well. Bullying is not tolerated. The school provides an extensive range of experiences for pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils take on leadership roles and contribute to the wider school community. Well-being champions lead assemblies, and older pupils support younger children with games on the playground.

The school's 'rights respecting' philosophy is an effective part of the school's work in developing pupils' character, understanding of other cultures and individual liberty. Events such as careers week encourage all pupils to aim high. Pupils get to meet people from different walks of life and jobs, including those in medicine, legal, marketing and museum curating. By the time pupils leave St Leonards, they are confident, articulate citizens who take their responsibilities seriously.

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

The curriculum is broad and ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff know what knowledge is to be taught and when. However, some parts of the curriculum are new and not embedded. This means that pupils' learning is not as secure in some subjects as others.

The mathematics curriculum and a few other subjects are in development. The order in which mathematics is taught is sequenced appropriately. The school has improved how pupils develop their mathematical fluency, reasoning and problem-solving. However, the checks teachers make on pupils' learning in mathematics and other subjects are not consistent. As a result, gaps in pupils' learning or misconceptions are not identified quickly enough. This means pupils do not learn key knowledge and skills as well as they should.

The school places reading at the centre of the curriculum. A new phonics programme is helping pupils learn to read and build their fluency and confidence. The focus on staff training and new resources are having a positive impact on teachers' subject knowledge. Pupils who fall behind in reading are identified quickly and supported to keep up with their peers. Pupils' love of reading is promoted effectively. For example, pupils participate enthusiastically in events such as reading cafés for parents, carers and grandparents in school.

Children in the early years, including those with SEND, get off to a flying start. From the moment they start in Nursery, children learn a range of rhymes and stories, giving them the language and communication skills they need for later reading. For example, children talk excitedly about the Diwali books teachers read to them. Children develop into inquisitive learners who explore new ideas carefully when learning with adults or through their play. Children with SEND learn alongside their peers. This helps all children settle quickly into the routines of this inclusive, friendly school.

Pupils' learning and knowledge is enriched by a wide range of visits, visitors and workshops. For example, inspectors heard pupils' gasps of surprise and awe when a visitor shared examples of Viking artefacts from the past. Similarly, the school offers a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular experiences to develop the interests and talents of pupils. Older pupils enjoy residential visits at outdoor activity centres. The school ensures that pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged can take part in these activities. Parents and pupils value the opportunities the school provides. These typical experiences help pupils build new learning and make memories.

Staff say the changes leaders are making are having a positive impact on their workload. They are given time to carry out their roles and develop through the extensive professional development programme. They also appreciate the opportunities they have been given to work with leaders in developing and improving the curriculum.

The school provides strong pastoral support for pupils and their families. Many parents say they value the information they receive from school and the opportunities to get involved in school life through the parent forum, workshops and celebration events. However, some parents feel that communication with home could be timelier and more effective.

Governors have an accurate view of the school. They know the strengths and areas for improvement. They provide useful support and challenge. The school makes good use of external consultants to support its continuing improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Aspects of the curriculum have been recently developed to raise ambition, including in mathematics and the foundation subjects. However, there is variation in how well these subjects are being taught. The school should ensure that staff are trained and supported to implement the revised curriculum effectively so that pupils learn more and remember more across all subjects.

- The school does not check consistently well what pupils know and remember. This means that gaps and misconceptions are not addressed quickly enough, and some pupils move on to work that is too complex before they are ready. The school must ensure that checks on pupils' knowledge and understanding enable gaps to be identified and addressed speedily.
- The school's communication with parents is not consistently timely. This means that some parents do not feel well informed about their child's learning, progress and wider school matters. The school should improve their communication with parents so that parents and carers are well informed and can engage well with life in school.

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 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	124199
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10343875
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-Chairs of governing body	Lana Howell and Karl Lawton
Headteacher	Karen Roberts
Website	www.stleonardsstafford.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and started in September 2023.
- The school moved to a new site in September 2023.
- The school's before- and after-school provision, Leo's Den, provides wraparound care.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth-form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- The inspectors observed pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors also discussed with leaders the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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 inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the special needs coordinator, early years leader and subject leaders.
- The inspectors met with representatives of the governing body, including the co-chairs.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text responses received during the inspection. They considered the responses to Ofsted’s staff survey and pupil survey. The inspectors also spoke with parents and carers at the start and end of the school day.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation. This included the school’s self-evaluation, strategic plans, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, attendance records and minutes of meetings held by governors.

Inspection team

Pamela Matty, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Zoe Thewlis

Ofsted Inspector

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