

Skerton St Luke's Church of England Primary School

Slyne Road, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 2JH

Inspection dates

27–28 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In recent years, pupils have not been served well academically at this school. Pupils' weak progress in writing and mathematics, especially in key stage 2, has not ensured that they are well prepared for their secondary school.
- Pupils have an uneven journey across the school. In some classes, their progress stutters and falters due to teachers' low expectations.
- Some teachers do not build upon what pupils already know and can do. As a result, pupils are not able to capitalise on the strong teaching that they enjoy in some classes.
- Transition from early years to Year 1 is particularly weak.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make weaker progress than that of their peers.
- The teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics lacks sufficient depth in some year groups. This hinders pupils' achievement in subjects such as art, design and technology and history.
- Subject leaders have too little influence on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- Governors do not check on the impact of leaders' agreed actions quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Children thrive in the early years.
- Leaders' enticing curriculum prepares pupils well to be responsible, thoughtful and caring citizens.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They enjoy all that is on offer. They behave well and they say that they feel safe. Their attendance is consistently above the national average.
- Following a period of decline, the school is turning a corner. Leaders, including governors, have an honest and accurate view of the school's major shortcomings.
- The headteacher has managed a challenging period in the school's history well. She has maintained the trust and confidence of staff, pupils, parents and carers.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - subject leaders take greater responsibility for the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in their allocated areas
 - leaders, governors and teachers raise their aspirations of the progress that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are capable of making
 - governors become more adept at checking the impact of planned actions in a timely manner.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers gain a better understanding of pupils' learning journey across the school, so that they can build on their starting points and take action to ensure that they reach their end-of-year goals
 - teachers use information about pupils' prior learning to shape tasks that meet their needs
 - the high expectations that some teachers have of what pupils can and should do for their age and ability are reflected in other classrooms
 - the teaching of writing enables pupils to become successful writers by allowing them to develop technical accuracy alongside an understanding of structure, tone and style
 - teachers enable pupils to use their mathematical skills to solve problems, including those that require them to reason
 - teachers give sufficient weight and depth to subjects other than English and mathematics
 - teachers take greater account of the learning needs of those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and build on the progress that these pupils make in the small-group teaching sessions.
- Ensure that the strong progress that pupils make in some classes and in some subjects is built upon as they move through the school so that their attainment rises at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 by ensuring that:
 - transition arrangements from early years to Year 1 are effective so that these pupils can take advantage of their strong starting points
 - pupils are able to make up the gaps in their learning caused by weaker teaching in the past
 - pupils gain subject-specific skills in subjects such as art, design and technology and history so that they have a solid foundation for the next stage in their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- St Luke's has gone through a tumultuous period over the last few years. Over half of the staff team in place at the time of the previous inspection have left, often being replaced by temporary teachers. Some classes have had up to three different teachers in one academic year. The impact of constant staff changes in such a small school has been far reaching and detrimental to the quality of education that pupils receive. It cannot be underestimated. Teaching has faltered, pupils' achievement has declined and some subjects have been neglected due to weak subject leadership.
- The headteacher, supported by the governing body, has battled against this wave of staffing instability with determination and grit. Leaders have not taken the easy option and 'made do'. Instead, they have sought to root out weak teaching in order to preserve pupils' right to a good-quality education in the long term. Comprehensive checks on teaching, in close partnership with the local authority, have led to appropriate training to improve teaching and subject leadership. However, leaders have often been thwarted in their efforts, as those staff who have received this close support have left, only to be replaced by new staff. This means that leaders have had to start the process all over again.
- Recent appointments are reducing the fragility in staffing. Consequently, the tide is turning. Teaching in some year groups is improving convincingly and most pupils are making stronger gains in their learning than they have previously. Nonetheless, the impact of weaker teaching over time has left its mark. Ineffective use of assessment information means that pupils continue to endure a bumpy ride, often making strong progress one year only to fall back the next. As a result, a legacy of underachievement has emerged, with many pupils unable to capitalise on what they have already learned.
- Leaders, including governors, are not in denial. They have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness and a realistic plan of action to bring about recovery. Nonetheless, for too long the headteacher has shouldered far more than a fair share of responsibility for turning the school around. This again relates to the instability in staffing, but the variable quality of subject leadership has also played its part. Most subject leaders are either new to their roles or they have not done enough to champion pupils' achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Some leaders are making a valuable contribution to the school's development. The subject leader for English has successfully flown the flag for reading, which is resulting in improved academic outcomes for pupils in this subject alongside their enjoyment of good-quality books. The leader for SEN has ensured that pupils' difficulties with learning are identified quickly and appropriate support programmes are put into place. Nonetheless, the academic ambitions for this group of pupils are not high enough. Leaders, including governors, focus too much on the small steps of progress that pupils make rather than considering how well these pupils achieve for their age and ability.
- Despite the decline in pupils' academic achievement, many of the strengths identified in the previous inspection report have been maintained and built upon. Pupils' attendance remains above the national average, they behave well around school and

they leave Year 6 more than ready to take on the world, due to their strong personal, social and emotional development. It is to the headteacher's credit and that of other leaders, staff and governors that St Luke's continues to be a warm and caring community that holds a special place in pupils' hearts.

- The turnaround in staff prompted leaders to implement a new curriculum to ensure that pupils' achievement in, and enjoyment of, different subjects did not disappear in the whole-school drive to raise reading, writing and mathematical standards. This has been successful in many ways. The curriculum is lively and matched to pupils' interests' It also ensures that they can find out about the world in which they live.
- Teachers adhere to agreed curriculum plans. However, the quality of pupils' learning across different subjects is varied. This hinders pupils from gaining the subject-specific skills and knowledge that they need to succeed in subjects other than English and mathematics. Some subjects, such as art and design and technology, are the 'poor relations' as too little time is devoted to these areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders' work to enrich the curriculum is strong and effective. A multitude of visits, visitors and links with local and international schools broaden pupils' experiences and help them to gain an appreciation of modern British society. Year 6 pupils, who set off on a residential visit during the inspection, spoke with enthusiasm about their trip to London to visit the Houses of Parliament and then to see a musical performance in the theatre.
- Frequent opportunities for pupils to consider and debate current affairs mean that they are able to state their views, respect the ideas presented by others and empathise with people who are facing challenging times, locally and further afield. This rich diet, underpinned by the strong Christian values that the school upholds, promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.

Governance of the school

- The good-quality and accurate information that members of the governing body receive from the headteacher, alongside their frequent visits to the school, ensures that they are in no doubt about the school's shortcomings. Consequently, governors have an honest and realistic understanding of how their school compares to others. They are firmly focused on supporting leaders to bring about recovery.
- With effective support from the local authority, governors are able to ask the right questions about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. However, as they readily admit, they are not always as effective in following up on agreed actions in a timely enough manner to prevent any slippage.
- Governors have worked effectively to implement a strategic approach in their use of the pupil premium funding. They are alert to the barriers that some disadvantaged pupils may have to their learning and they systematically check the difference that the school's actions make to the achievement of this group.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Keeping pupils safe is the cornerstone of leaders' and governors' work. Safeguarding is all-encompassing, including comprehensive policies, guidance for parents on the website and effective links with outside agencies. It is threaded throughout the curriculum so that pupils can explore how to look after themselves in school, at home and in the wider world.
- Well-trained staff know and understand their responsibilities to the pupils in their care. They are alert to different types of abuse, and they know the signs that may indicate that a pupil is suffering from harm. Concerns raised about any pupil, no matter how small, are taken seriously, recorded clearly and acted upon promptly.
- All of the parents who shared their views on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agree that pupils are safe at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- In recent years, pupils' opportunity to thrive academically has been too dependent on which year group they belonged to. The chance to benefit from good-quality teaching has been a lottery for too many pupils due to the constant turnaround of staff. As a result, many pupils have lost ground. They are not able to live up to the promise of their positive starting points on entry into Year 1 and Year 3.
- Recent permanent appointments, staff training and a systematic approach to teaching some curriculum subjects are beginning to tackle past inequalities. An air of enthusiasm and increased ambition among staff has taken hold, which in turn is leading to greater confidence and refreshed teaching skills. Nonetheless, there is still a distance to travel to ensure that good-quality teaching is commonplace at St Luke's.
- Some pupils are blossoming due to their teachers' high expectations, challenging questions and strong subject knowledge. These teachers have a secure grasp of the national curriculum requirements and ensure that pupils gain the skills and knowledge needed to succeed. For example, Year 2 pupils' mathematics books show how well their thinking and mathematical reasoning skills have been developed over the year. Year 6 pupils' writing books are a joy to behold, crammed full of interesting work that compels the reader to turn the page.
- This is not reflected elsewhere. Some teachers do not make good use of the information about pupils' prior learning well enough to build on what pupils already know and can already do. Not enough thought is given to the gaps that have emerged in pupils' learning over time. Consequently, pupils face work that they can already do or sometimes attempt tasks that are too difficult.
- Not enough consideration is given to pupils' learning journey as they move through the school. Some teachers do not see their place in this big picture. Consequently, pupils' starting points or where the pupils need to be by the end of the academic year or key stage receive insufficient attention. This is especially true in writing. Some teachers allow pupils to form letters incorrectly, misspell common words and use a limited range of grammar and punctuation conventions. This puts pupils on the back foot when they move into the next class. It also accounts for their weak progress in writing over time.
- The teaching of reading is improving quickly due to a refreshed whole-school approach. Phonics teaching has not been good enough in recent times. It has failed to build on

the good start that children make in early reading in Reception. However, recent changes to staffing have helped to reverse this situation, but for the current Year 1 this is too late. Almost half of this group has not met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. They will be on immediate catch-up at the start of Year 2.

- Appropriate coverage of the mathematics curriculum means that pupils have a greater understanding of key concepts. However, teachers' ability to help pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems or to use their reasoning skills is very much a mixed picture across the school.
- Teaching of other subjects is similarly patchy. In some year groups, pupils gain secure skills and knowledge in some subjects. In other classes and subjects, pupils' learning is superficial. For example, Year 3 pupils demonstrate an ability to carry out scientific investigations and to draw conclusions about natural phenomena. Pupils' books in other classes indicate that they may not get enough opportunities to do this type of work again. In some classes, the drive to raise pupils' reading, writing and mathematical attainment has resulted in some other subjects having scant coverage, or subject-specific skills being overridden by literacy-based tasks.
- Those pupils who find learning more difficult do not fare as well as other pupils. This is because teachers do not capitalise on the well-run and effective small-group teaching sessions that these pupils attend. Nor do some teachers take enough account of pupils' specific learning needs and targets in class. As a result, these pupils often have to rely far too heavily on adults to help them make sense of the work that is provided.
- Despite the constant chopping and changing of staff, pupils' enjoyment of learning and their desire to come to school have not waned. Pupils speak highly of their teachers and the positive relationships that they enjoy with all adults in the school. While some pupils remarked on the number of different teachers whom they have worked with, none expressed any concerns that this was unsettling or put them at a disadvantage.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are kind and caring. They step in to help others out when needed, often without any prompting from adults. For example, older pupils automatically stopped by the water fountain to help their younger schoolmates fill their water bottles. One boy escorted his friend inside the building following a minor fall in the playground. His comforting arm and gentle words went a long way to cheering up his pal.
- Different groups of pupils say that they feel secure in school and safe from harmful name-calling or hurtful actions by others. It is their view that bullying is a rare occurrence because, as one pupil stated, 'We all love school and we all love our friends.' Pupils trust the adults in school to take swift action to tackle any behaviour that is causing others to be unsafe or unhappy.
- Pupils know why it is wrong to single out others who may have different-colour skin, hold different religious beliefs or are in a same-sex relationship. They talked maturely

about how people 'can be hurt on the inside' just as easily as if they were physically assaulted. It is their view that 'differences do not matter as we are all God's creation'. Such beliefs underpin pupils' tolerance and respect for others.

- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. This was clearly evident during the inspection as everyone, from the youngest children to the oldest pupils, put on hats and sunscreen to keep themselves safe while outside. Recent work on internet safety has had a big impact. Pupils talked knowledgeably about the caution they need to exercise when encountering new people online. Materials from a national charity are used well to equip pupils with the tools to avoid or to report any situations where invasion of their personal space makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Pupils are becoming mature and reliable youngsters who take on the mantle of responsibility well. They are keen to make a contribution to their school. Members of the junior leadership team organise events to raise money for local and national charities, usually those close to other pupils' hearts. Older pupils act as buddies to and role models for the very youngest children, so that they quickly become part of the school family when they enter Reception.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are eager workers, they listen carefully, follow instructions and try to do their best. Their books indicate that most pupils take pride in their work.
- During the inspection, despite the hot weather and the very warm classrooms, pupils' good manners and respect for adults and for each other did not falter. Most pupils demonstrated good self-control and conducted themselves well around school. School records and the views of staff, including those who care for pupils during the lunchbreak, confirm that this positive behaviour is typical. Almost all of the parents who responded to Parent View agree that pupils behave well. Pupils themselves say that the behaviour of most pupils is good and that their learning is rarely interrupted by poor behaviour.
- This positive picture is at odds with the higher-than-average exclusion rates over a period of time. This is due to a very small minority of pupils who find managing their own behaviour very difficult. Strong support for pupils' social, emotional and mental well-being, coupled with effective use of external agencies, is successfully reducing the incidence of unacceptable behaviour. Pupils are being given the tools to know when their emotions are taking over and permission to spend some time in the soothing nurture room.
- Temporary exclusions currently remain a feature in the school. However, records show that exclusion from school is the very last resort. Moreover, a reciprocal agreement with a local school means that, although pupils miss time at St Luke's, they continue to be educated and kept safe during this short period.
- Alternative provision is used rarely but, when it is, leaders and teachers are highly effective in checking on pupils' behaviour, safety, attendance and learning. Pupils are

not forgotten. The ultimate goal is to reintegrate them quickly and seamlessly into their mainstream classroom.

- Pupils only have good things to say about their school. Their enjoyment in entering the school building is evident in their attendance rates, which are consistently above the national average for all groups of pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Instability in staffing has taken its toll on pupils' achievement. Their progress and attainment by the end of key stage 2 dropped sharply in 2016. Despite some small signs of improvement in the 2017 results, pupils continued to make poor progress, especially in mathematics and writing. The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in these subjects was below average for the second year running. Consequently, these pupils were ill equipped to make a successful start when they joined their chosen secondary school.
- Key stage 1 pupils did not fare much better in 2017. Although, typically, Year 2 pupils are well prepared to start Year 3, this was not the case last year, when attainment also dipped, especially in writing. As a result, many pupils were already on catch-up as soon as they entered key stage 2.
- Although improving, the progress of pupils currently at the school remains uneven. Poor transition into Year 1 means that pupils cannot capitalise on the strong start that they receive in the early years. Instead of moving forward, they fall back and gaps emerge in their knowledge and understanding. They typically make up for lost time in Year 2, only to falter again when they reach key stage 2. This year, from an extremely low baseline, Year 6 pupils have worked incredibly hard and made rapid gains in their learning. However, this does not negate the fact that weaker teaching in the past caused them to tread water. Despite their strong progress this academic year, their progress over time is just not good enough.
- In particular, middle- and low-ability pupils underachieved the most in the end-of-key-stage assessments and tests. These outcomes are not a typical pattern for current cohorts. In short, pupils who enjoy stronger teaching typically achieve better, regardless of their prior attainment. However, this is not true for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They make weaker progress than others in almost all classes.
- Disadvantaged pupils did well at the end of key stage 1 in 2017. Their attainment matched that of other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. This was not true at the end of key stage 2. However, the school's current assessment information shows an improving picture across the school. These pupils are making the same, and sometimes better, progress as their peers in school.
- The most able pupils attained well in the end of key stage 2 tests, so that the proportion gaining the higher standards exceeded the national average for reading and writing. Their books, and the data held by the school, indicate that this group has mostly managed to withstand the disruption caused by staff changes.
- Pupils are enjoying greater success in reading, across the school. Opportunities for them to use the revitalised library, to study novels in greater depth and to build their comprehension skills are ensuring that they read with enjoyment and understanding.

Pupils typically read with fluency and accuracy. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the school's work to help those pupils who did not reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check to catch up.

- Pupils' books show that they have ample opportunity to explore different types of writing and to gain some understanding of spelling, grammar and punctuation. The writing produced by older pupils is quite often stunning in quality. Their use of language, style and tone is commendable. For example, one pupil used short sentences, creative imagery and powerful words to get across the angst of Lady Macbeth. In stark contrast, other pupils in key stage 2 are not developing into skilled and imaginative writers. Weaknesses in their technical skills, including their letter formation, hold them back. They have not been helped to understand the power of sentence structure or to develop a sufficiently mature vocabulary so that they can express their ideas clearly.
- In some year groups, pupils achieve well in subjects such as science, history and geography. In others they do not, because they have too few opportunities to deepen their learning or to gain subject-specific skills, such as using artefacts to find out about the past or to try out different artistic techniques and media to draw, paint or model.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years has escaped the staffing difficulties that have plagued the rest of the school. This area of the school has gone from strength to strength since the previous inspection, due to effective teaching and strong leadership.
- Over half of the children who enter Reception have skills and knowledge that are below those typically associated with their age. Some struggle with language and communication skills, while others have additional personal, social and emotional needs. However, barriers to learning are dealt with quickly and efficiently so that children make good progress in their learning. Consequently, the proportion of children who gain a good level of development has increased each year and is above the national average.
- Different groups of children, including disadvantaged children and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make good progress. Those children who enter the school with stronger skills and knowledge are helped to excel. As a result, the proportion of children who exceed the early learning goals is also improving steadily over time.
- Observations of children learning, plus a review of their books and assessment records, show that they are more than ready to take on the challenges of Year 1. Children are cooperative, attentive and willing to work hard. They are keen to write and happily put their strong phonics knowledge to good use when spelling and reading new words. They know number patterns and they are confident enough to calculate the answer to simple problems mentally.
- The well-organised and attractive environment supports children's learning well. The outdoor area, a relative weakness at the previous inspection, is an exciting, purposeful and stimulating space. The activities on offer encourage children to be curious, to use their imagination and to talk about their ideas.

- Planned activities are shaped effectively to meet children’s learning needs and their interests. Consequently, visitors to early years are greeted by a hive of activity, an air of concentration and many smiling faces. Adults work together seamlessly to support learning and to check on children’s progress. They tune in well to children’s play and ask good-quality questions to promote their knowledge and skills. Adults are very adept at modelling language. This expands children’s vocabulary and encourages them to communicate with confidence.
- Children respond well to the warm relationships that they enjoy with early years staff. Good role modelling from adults and their Year 6 buddies means that children treat each other, the environment and their equipment with respect. They behave well, follow careful routines and keep themselves safe.
- The early years leader has been instrumental in engineering the good-quality provision that children encounter each day. Her vision is shared by the early years team, which responds positively to the support and training that are offered to improve their skills further. Opportunities for parents to visit the classroom and to see their children at work and play underpin the positive partnerships in place between home and school. Good links with the many nursery settings that children attend before beginning at St Luke’s mean that children settle quickly and happily into school life.
- Staff adhere closely to the welfare requirements and the school’s safeguarding procedures to ensure that children are safe and secure.

School details

Unique reference number	119534
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10042483

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Lucy Ellis
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Armistead
Telephone number	01524 65445
Website	www.skertonstlukes.lancs.sch.uk/
Email address	head@skertonstlukes.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2014

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The school population is made up of pupils from nine different ethnic groups. Pupils of White British heritage make up the largest proportion on the school's roll.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than that found in other schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average. There are fewer pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an educational health care plan in the school than found nationally.
- The number of pupils who receive support through the pupil premium funding is above average.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a considerable change in staffing, with many classes being covered by temporary teachers for varying amounts of time. A new

deputy headteacher was appointed at the beginning of the 2018 summer term. A new leadership structure is currently being implemented in preparation for the new academic year.

- The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2016 and 2017. These are the minimum standards and rate of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils in key stage 2.
- The school uses one alternative provider: Stepping Stones Pupil Referral Unit.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited most classrooms to observe teaching, pupils' learning and behaviour. The headteacher joined inspectors on some of these classroom visits.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at play. They met formally with three groups of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of staff. They also met with three members of the local governing body and two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of the school's information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' books.
- Inspectors talked to a small group of parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the 45 responses to Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 22 responses from staff and the 31 responses from pupils to Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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