

The Oratory Roman Catholic Primary School

Oliver Road, Ladywood, Birmingham, West Midlands B16 9ER

Inspection dates

27–28 November 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, pupils' outcomes have fallen and, until recently, school leaders and governors did not have a comprehensive picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have now implemented strategies to meet the areas for improvement identified at last inspection. However, these have not yet had a significant impact on pupil's outcomes, particularly at the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders have introduced new assessment and tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress but it is too soon to see the impact of these on pupils' outcomes.
- Teaching is improving, and adults have increasingly high expectations about what pupils can achieve, but approaches to teaching remain inconsistent.
- Some teaching, especially in writing, does not challenge the most able or meet the needs of those who are disadvantaged or with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Pupils enjoy learning in a wide range of subjects but leaders do not keep a close enough track on how well pupils' skills are developing.
- Leaders have not acted quickly enough to address the weak progress made by children in writing.
- Leaders are not checking carefully enough on the impact that pupil premium funding is having on the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils.
- Over time, children in the early years make good progress. However, the quality of teaching and assessment is currently too variable. This means that some children are not making as much progress as they could.
- Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is not fully developed.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are keen, enthusiastic learners. They are polite, respectful and welcoming to all. Pupils say that they are happy, feel safe and are well looked after. The majority of parents and carers agree.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics and reading.
- As a result of better teaching, outcomes in mathematics are improving.
- A wide range of curriculum experiences, including those beyond lessons, help to ensure that pupils enjoy school and attend regularly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring:
 - consistency in the approaches to teaching across the school
 - consistency in all teachers following the school’s assessment policy
 - that activities are planned to meet the needs of pupils, especially the most able
 - that teachers have high expectations for what pupils can achieve.
- Improve outcomes, especially in writing, by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils reaching the highest standards expected for their age
 - ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to write, both in English and across the wider curriculum
 - increasing the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND reaching at least the standards expected for their age.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early years by:
 - ensuring that all adults provide pupils with a range of interesting and demanding activities that challenge pupils and enable them to make good progress.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders and governors:
 - have a secure and comprehensive understanding of the quality of education provided
 - identify the key aspects requiring improvement and take rapid and decisive actions to address these
 - monitor regularly the impact of these actions on outcomes for pupils
 - develop systems to check the development of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum
 - strengthen pupils’ understanding of fundamental British values.

An external review of the school’s use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Historically, governors and school leaders have been slow to act to address weaknesses in the school's provision. Until recently, they did not have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders have now identified actions to meet these areas; however, it is too soon to see the impact of some of these strategies.
- Over the last four years, school leaders have managed significant changes in staffing, budget constraints and the introduction of a new curriculum. However, pupils' outcomes have fallen during this time and teaching is not consistently good across the school.
- The inclusion leader closely monitors how well pupils with SEND are taught and regularly checks on their welfare. It is, however, too soon to see the impact of recently raised expectations on classroom provision and whole-school interventions.
- Leaders have not evaluated rigorously enough the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. While they have started to address this, they do not have a secure understanding of how the support provided has influenced the progress that these pupils make. This is a factor in these pupils not making as much progress as they should.
- The school's curriculum is currently under review to ensure that it meets the pupils' needs and interests. Leaders need to do more to be certain that all the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding in the foundation subjects are well planned across the curriculum.
- The curriculum is based around a range of topics. For example, Year 6 spoke enthusiastically about a water-based theme linked to evolution during which they learned about Charles Darwin and visited the Sea-Life Centre. All pupils have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument during Years 3 and 4.
- Recent developments at middle-leadership level mean that these members of staff are able to identify the strengths in their subjects and what needs to be done to improve pupils' outcomes further. Middle leaders check the impact of their work in improving teaching and learning across the school, but this is not yet fully reflected in the proportions of pupils reaching the standards expected for their age.
- Assemblies and lessons help develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and reflect the strong Catholic ethos of the school. Projects linked to topics such as Remembrance Day, the First World War and Black History Month provide opportunities for pupils to learn about events and cultures which impact on their lives today. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, including a variety of sports and games, French and a coding club. Pupils enjoy their lessons and this learning is reinforced by related educational visits and a residential trip for older pupils. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of fairness, tolerance and respect but they do not learn about some aspects of fundamental British values, such as democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty.
- Leaders have strengthened systems for the professional development of all staff. These are closely linked to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The

vast majority of staff feel that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support school improvement and they feel well supported.

- The majority of parents are happy with the quality of provision for their child at the school and would recommend the school to another parent. As one parent wrote, 'My children get up every day and are happy to go to school. They enjoy their time in school.' A minority of parents raised concerns about reduced staffing levels. Inspectors did not find any evidence that changes to staffing were having a negative impact on the quality of education provided.
- Primary school physical education and sport funding is used well to provide a wide range of sporting and well-being opportunities for pupils. For example, the school employs a team of health mentors to support pupils with sporting activities and playtime games.
- Leaders are now working effectively with a range of professional partners who provide expertise and challenge to the school. This has empowered leaders to become more focused on key areas for improvement.

Governance of the school

- Evidence from meetings indicates that governors have only recently started to challenge leaders over the poor performance of some groups of pupils and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The governing body has recently been strengthened and some governors are new to post. They bring high levels of expertise and a fresh perspective to evaluate the effectiveness of the school. They have started to use monitoring systems better to support school leaders to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Governors know that teaching over time has been too variable and recognise the impact that recent staff changes and budget constraints have had on school development.
- Governors have received appropriate training, for example in safeguarding and child protection. Governors make regular visits to the school in order to check on aspects of the school's provision. These findings are shared with other governors to keep them up to date.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant checks are made on adults before they are allowed to start working or volunteering in the school. Records are kept in a good order and are regularly checked by governors and school leaders.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Staff have received relevant training in, for example, child protection, radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. Consequently, adults at the school are alert to concerns regarding pupils' welfare.
- Leaders have developed an effective online system for recording and acting upon safeguarding concerns. The school has recently completed the transition from class-

based concern books to a centralised, online system. There is an effective approach to ensuring that pupils and their families receive any extra support from outside agencies quickly and effectively.

- The great majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire agree that their child feels safe at school and is well looked after.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Despite recent positive developments in staffing, the quality of teaching remains inconsistent across the school. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is too variable across classes.
- Teachers do not always expect enough from pupils, in particular those who are most able. As a result, activities are not challenging enough, and too few pupils achieve the standards expected nationally for pupils of their ability, especially in writing.
- In some year groups, learning tasks are not well matched to pupils' learning needs. Sometimes, most-able pupils find the tasks too easy and, conversely, lower-ability pupils cannot complete learning tasks because they are not equipped with the necessary skills. For example, in one mathematics lesson a group of children were not able to complete a task on multiplying by 1,000 because they had not established the skill of multiplying by 10.
- Teachers provide too few opportunities for pupils to write at length and across the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not have opportunities to practise and develop the skills that they have learned in literacy lessons. In some cases, teachers had not effectively planned sequences of work to ensure that pupils acquired the necessary skills to develop the quality of their writing.
- Staff do not follow the school's assessment policy consistently. As a result, pupils are sometimes unclear about what they need to do next to improve their work. However, in some cases, most noticeably in Years 4 and 5, pupils did understand what they needed to do to achieve the next step in their learning.
- The quality of mathematics teaching is improving and this is reflected in the increased proportion of pupils achieving the standard expected for their age by the end of key stages 1 and 2. Teachers are now planning opportunities for pupils to practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills more often. These opportunities encourage pupils to think more deeply about where and when to apply specific mathematical skills. Teachers are teaching basic skills effectively and pupils are becoming more confident in explaining their calculations.
- Leaders have recently adapted systems to assess and track pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The process is now more rigorous. It allows leaders and teachers to identify more quickly the progress that pupils are making and any pupils who may be at risk of falling behind.
- The teaching of phonics is strong. It is well structured and effective. The school uses partnerships with families to support the development of these early reading skills. Teachers and leaders encourage a love of reading across the school. Older pupils are

developing strong recall, comprehension and reasoning skills to match their reading fluency and vocabulary awareness.

- The vast majority of pupils take great pride in their work and are proud to share their work and talk about what they are doing.
- Teaching assistants work hard to support pupils' learning. They receive effective training and professional development. This ensures that they have the necessary skills to help pupils to make better progress. When they are not best utilised, they do not provide appropriate tasks for children to be independent learners or to access additional support as required.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The vast majority of pupils take responsibility for their learning, demonstrating good attitudes in class.
- A positive emphasis is placed on supporting pupils' well-being. There are a number of opportunities for pupils to succeed and for their self-esteem to flourish. Pupils talked to inspectors about 'Fortitude' – a story and programme that helps the pupils develop a positive mindset to completing challenges by using statements such as 'I can't do this...yet'. The programme is having a positive impact on improving pupil's attitudes to learning.
- Playtimes are well organised, providing a range of activities that are supported by staff. As a result, pupils play well with each other and there are few incidents of poor behaviour.
- Pupils take on a variety of responsibilities such as being librarians, members of the eco council or taking roles to support younger children. For example, some older pupils take on a 'Guardian Angels' role and support young children, under the supervision of adults. Leaders plan to extend these opportunities further by introducing a 'Children's Parliament'.
- The school provides strong pastoral support. It offers both organised therapeutic counselling, for children and parents and carers, and informal drop-in opportunities when children can share their worries and concerns with trained members of staff.
- The school's partnerships with external agencies are strong. These are used to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils and families access the right support in a timely way.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Governors and leaders have created a positive and welcoming atmosphere across the school. Pupils play well together and the school is very inclusive, with staff and pupils keen to make everyone feel involved and valued. Most pupils show respect for others

and are keen to impress their teachers. Pupils comment on the positive behaviour across the school.

- Leaders have successfully developed this area and it is a growing strength of the school. Pupils behave well in lessons and move calmly around the school. They are sensible in the dining area and enjoy playing together on the playground.
- Leaders and teachers use a variety of different strategies to promote positive behaviours such as celebration assemblies, headteacher awards and 'Thinking like Fortitude' star badges.
- While some children shared with inspectors that the behaviour system is not used consistently across the school, most spoke positively about how behaviour is managed. It is clear to them how they can be rewarded for good behaviour.
- In those rare cases where behaviour is challenging, the school works with a range of services and families to address the behaviour. In these cases, leaders and teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their own behaviour and identify what changes need to be made. For example, a pupil may work with a member of staff to identify strategies to help them deal with a situation, should it happen again.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and improving. Leaders are proactive in working with families to strengthen this further and will use a variety of different strategies to encourage high levels of attendance. For example, the school celebrates pupils with 100% attendance on a half-termly basis.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and they have a developing understanding of bullying in different forms. They are confident that should an incident arise there is a trusted adult in whom they can confide. While a number of parents who responded to the online survey raised concerns about how the school deals with bullying, inspectors found little evidence to support this concern.
- In a small minority of lessons, children become distracted and lose focus on their work. This is linked to teaching that lacks challenge and does not engage pupils fully.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Currently, pupils make variable amounts of progress across class groups and subjects. As a result, in some subjects, such as phonics and reading, pupils make strong progress, while in writing some fall behind. Senior leaders are tackling these inconsistencies, but it is too early to see the impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Since the last inspection, standards in mathematics have improved across both key stage 1 and 2. While writing has improved in key stage 1, too few pupils achieve age-related expectations at the end of key stage 2.
- At the end of key stage 2, attainment in mathematics and reading is at least in line with the national average and pupils make similar progress to others nationally from their starting points. In writing, pupils' progress is weak.
- At the end of key stage 1, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly similar to the national average.

- Although there are signs that outcomes for disadvantage pupils are improving, they are not catching up with other pupils quickly enough, particularly in writing. This is because, over time, the quality of teaching they have received has not been good enough.
- Too few pupils attain the higher standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that pupils who are most-able are not achieving the same standards as those with similar starting points nationally.
- While there have been developments in understanding the needs of pupils with SEND, too few are making strong progress from their starting points.
- The number of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics by the end of key stage 1 has been at least in line with the national average for the last three years. This is because the teaching of phonics is securely established across key stage 1.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children enter Nursery or Reception with skills and understanding that are below those typical for their age. Many children have poor language and communication skills.
- On entry to school, staff develop positive relationships with families. This means that children settle well and parents feel able to contribute to the early learning journey of their child. One parent shared, 'So far, I am extremely happy with the teacher and the progress my child is making. I am constantly notified of his studies.'
- Children have access to a wide range of activities in construction, paint, water and sand. Routines are well established throughout the early years and children's behaviour is good. They play well with each other and cooperate well with the adults.
- The teaching of phonics is appropriately prioritised in the curriculum, with children accessing a range of teacher-led tasks and child-led activities to develop their understanding of letter sounds. In one lesson observed, the teacher was teaching the children about the 'y' sound by using the 'yoghurt song'. This helped the majority of children to learn the sound well and they were then able to recognise the sound in different words.
- Historically, children's attainment has been in line with other schools nationally by the end of the Reception Year. This represents good progress. However, the current quality of teaching and learning in the early years is not consistent. Standards achieved by children, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, are variable across different areas of the curriculum.
- Although staff know the children well, assessment is not used effectively to plan purposeful activities. This is particularly the case for some children with SEND. For example, the introduction to some sessions is too long and this means that a number of children lose interest and become distracted.
- While there have been developments in the organisation of the learning environment, too often children are left unoccupied for periods of time. This means that there are missed opportunities to develop children's learning effectively. Sometimes, children occupy themselves with a range of activities put out for them to do, but these do not necessarily develop the skills that they need to learn.

- The headteacher, who currently leads the early years, has identified the weaknesses in provision and has started to address these areas. However, the impact is not yet evident in the progress of children currently in the early years.
- The welfare and safety of the children are given the correct priority in the early years. Staff are appropriately trained and respond to the children's personal needs and health and safety requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	103427
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10052848

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Anton Guziel
Headteacher	Clare Dickinson
Telephone number	0121 454 0600
Website	www.oratory.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@oratory.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2018

Information about this school

- The Oratory Roman Catholic Primary School is a smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- A well-above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- Nursery children attend school on a part-time basis from the age of three years. Children in Reception attend full time.

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have been in post since the last section 5 inspection (March 2014).
- Over the last 12 months, the governing body has gone through significant change, with the appointment of five new governors.
- The school runs a before-school sports club and a range of after-school clubs. These are managed by the governing body.
- The school works formally with other local Catholic primary schools.
- The school receives school improvement support, commissioned by the local authority, and from an external school improvement partner.
- A new school website has recently been developed. This meets Department for Education requirements on the publication of statutory information.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 16 lessons, some of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work in all year groups to gain a view of the impact of teaching over time.
- Inspectors considered parents' opinions through scrutinising 41 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 27 free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke to some parents on the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons and around the school. One inspector listened to some pupils read. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime, as well as in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector also spoke to the school learning improvement adviser, an adviser from the local education partnership and the education officer from the diocesan education trust.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including: the school's plan for improvement; the most recent information on the achievement and progress of pupils; information relating to the health, safety and safeguarding of pupils; the most recent data relating to the attendance of pupils and minutes of the governing body.
- The inspectors considered the wide range and quality of information provided on the existing school website and the new, recently completed website.

Inspection team

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Michael Appleby

Ofsted Inspector

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