

St Laurence Church Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103416
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376898
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2012
Lead inspector	Martyn Groucutt

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	355
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phillip Vernon
Headteacher	Jane Lindsay
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2009
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt

Additional inspector

Anthony Green

Additional inspector

Veronica McGill

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. A total of 26 lessons taught by 14 teachers were observed, taking 13 hours of inspection time. Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, senior and middle school leaders, the school council and other representative pupils, and with a consultant who works with the school. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documentation on the pupils' performance and progress. They also looked at a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding. A total of 170 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were scrutinised. The views recorded in staff and pupil questionnaires were also noted.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized junior school. Most pupils previously attended the adjoining Saint Laurence infant school, which is on the same site, but which is completely separate, having its own governing body and staff. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is a little below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritages. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is well-below average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly in line with that found in schools nationally. The governing body runs a breakfast and after school club for pupils each school day.

Government floor standards have been met for the last three years. Since the last inspection, when the headteacher was newly in post, there has been a period of staffing turbulence during which six teachers left the school. The situation has now stabilised.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school.
- The headteacher has introduced effective changes to the curriculum, teaching, and leadership and management. The impact of the changes has accelerated now the school's staffing has stabilised.
- There is discrepancy between standards pupils reached in Key Stage 1 assessments in the infant school, and standards in the school's own moderated assessments at the start of Year 3. These show pupils entering with lower attainment. There are no joint checks of the level of pupils' work by the infant school and the junior school together.
- Achievement is satisfactory and improving. Data show that the current Year 6 is on track to meet challenging targets.
- Behaviour is very good. Pupils, parents and carers say the school is safe. The good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is reflected in the pupils' good attitudes, particularly the way in which pupils show empathy and an ability to listen to the views of others.
- Careful monitoring of teaching shows good improvement; some was previously inadequate. Most teaching is now good or outstanding, but, over time, its impact has been satisfactory. Where teaching has weaker features, teachers do not involve pupils enough in their learning.
- The school is well equipped with information and communication technology (ICT), but opportunities to use ICT are not always taken.
- Systems for tracking progress made by pupils have been introduced and are implemented rigorously to make sure individuals do not drop behind. Detailed data from these systems are not used consistently to monitor the progress of groups of pupils, in order to raise achievement.
- Leaders, including the governing body, have a very clear vision for the school and pursue this relentlessly. Pupils and parents and carers speak very positively about the direction now being taken by the school.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement as soon as possible work that is underway with St Laurence Infant School to agree and implement a transition policy that includes protocols for the moderation of pupils' work by Year 2 and Year 3 teachers prior to pupils joining the junior school.
- Increase the percentage of teaching that is good or better through;
 - ensuring that teacher talk does not dominate lessons
 - maximising opportunities to use ICT in class
 - involving pupils in developing success criteria.
- Narrow the gap in achievement further by identified groups of pupils through;
 - promoting strategies that will raise the average points score achieved by these pupils further
 - embedding the use of the Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) framework for tracking achievement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' progress over time is satisfactory. Attainment is broadly average. Year 6 attainment last year was lower than is typical, reflecting their lower standards when they started in Year 3. Parents and carers, rightly, feel that achievement is rising for pupils currently in the school. As one parent said, 'I am delighted with the changes that have been put in place since the present headteacher was appointed'.

Assessment information is now detailed and rigorous and the school can demonstrate that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are now closing the gap in achievement with other pupils. Those pupils are now learning well in lessons and in small group work, because of the effective provision made at an individual level. The school shows particular skills in promoting the achievement of pupils on the autistic spectrum. Over time, however, their progress has been satisfactory. The lack of contact and work moderation with teachers of the older infants limits the information available when pupils join in Year 3. That means that learning can be slowed as teachers take time to discover the strengths and weaknesses of pupils. Though standards in reading are average by the time pupils leave the school, leaders and managers identified that boys were performing less well than girls. The actions they have taken are having a positive impact on achievement.

Pupils' challenging individual targets are being met by increasingly confident learners who know what they have to do in order to gain success. That was evident in the lesson observations undertaken, when pupils demonstrated that they knew what they had to achieve. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson pupils showed they knew their targets and levels and plotted their targets on a wall chart. That enabled them to be very focussed on what they were aiming for. In talking to pupils in lessons, it was clear they knew that their targets were intended to reflect their

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current level and to support them in making the best possible progress. They respond positively to achieving their targets as quickly as possible because targets take where each pupil is now as the starting point and challenge them to improve. As a result, pupils demonstrate an ability to learn well in all subjects.

Quality of teaching

Taken over time, teaching has had a satisfactory impact on achievement. However, much is now good and some is outstanding. That reflects continuing improvement over time since stability in staffing has been restored.

The curriculum provides a good framework for teachers' planning. The planning is detailed and usually takes into account the varying abilities of pupils in the group, so that they can all be challenged academically and show achievement. Skills of literacy and numeracy are developing effectively and the school is now confident that the quality of teaching is rising because of the careful monitoring of the curriculum and the way it is being delivered. As one teacher said, 'I can now tell you exactly where my pupils are in their progress, which I could not have done previously'. In the best lessons, activities are well planned, time is used well and pace is good. Teaching assistants are used effectively to ensure that all pupils, including those who need additional support, are able to make progress and narrow the gap in achievement. One parent said, 'My son struggled in maths and English lessons; the teachers picked this up and provided booster groups which have really helped'. Although the school is increasingly using data to good effect, there are a few occasions when opportunities are not taken to give pupils personalised work to ensure they learn as well as possible.

Learning objectives are made clear in every lesson, so pupils understand what they will achieve if they meet the success criteria. In the best lessons, the pupils are involved in setting the criteria. When that happens, they have a thorough understanding of what is needed, but this is not always the case. Similarly, pace of learning is good when pupils are given plenty of opportunities to learn actively, but, sometimes, teachers talk for too long and learning slows. Although the school is well equipped, there are occasions when the use of ICT is not maximised in lessons. Teachers give good attention to promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example through giving them time to assess each other's work and discuss it, time to think, and challenging tasks that demand reflection. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson discussing the film *The Piano*, one pupil said 'It's a very, very good film, but very sad at times'. In a Year 6 literacy lesson on personification, a pupil wrote 'The whiteboard silently waiting as the children came through the door. The planner wept as the sharp pencil touched her cold skin'.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers and staff report there have traditionally been high expectations of positive behaviour and this is supported by the fact that pupils have very positive relationships with each other and with staff. Attendance is above average and pupils

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enjoy coming to school. A parent wrote 'In my opinion the school has improved greatly over the two years my daughters have attended. It is a lovely environment for my children to be in'. The behaviour witnessed by inspectors in lessons and around the school was very good, supporting effective learning. Pupils listen to each other and respect the views of others. Because they treat each other so well, all the pupils, parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires say that the school is a safe place. Pupils told the inspectors that bullying is very rare, but, when it occurs, it is dealt with effectively. That is reflected in the views of a parent, who said 'On one occasion when I raised an issue about a possible bullying incident it was dealt with immediately, feedback given and there have been no further incidents'. There is clear advice on cyber-bullying. Where the nature of a pupil's behaviour can be challenging, they are supported very positively within an inclusive framework that enables them to participate as full class members.

Leadership and management

The current headteacher has instilled a passion and determination to achieve excellence; staff questionnaires reflect a very high degree of commitment to the school currently. As one parent said, 'The teaching and teaching staff have gone from strength to strength since the headteacher took over'. The ambition of staff and the headteacher is supported by effective management structures in which post-holders at all levels have clear responsibilities which they carry out with commitment and energy, including support and professional development for staff. The quality of governance is also good, with the governing body well informed and involved in shaping the direction of the school, challenging and supporting in equal measure. Statutory duties, such as those around safeguarding, implementing equality and developing community cohesion are carried out effectively and underpin the nature of the school. A commitment to ensuring that all pupils succeed translates into practice where every individual is treated with respect and equality, irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity, and is supported and empowered to fulfil their potential. The changes brought about over the past three years, particularly the transformation of the school's ability to track and monitor the progress of every pupil, are now coming to fruition. As a consequence, teaching is now supporting pupils to achieve their best.

The curriculum has undergone major development and care is taken to ensure that it meets the identified needs of all pupils. For example, the identified under-achievement of boys in reading has been tackled effectively with new reading materials and the introduction of cross-curricular themes, which has added interest and raised engagement. Because themes relate to the 'real world', pupils feel involved and can pursue topics that have a relevance to their lives. During the inspection, Year 6 were just starting a topic on World War 2 and both they and their teachers appeared in school dressed in the clothes of the time and ready for evacuation out of the city – it was a powerful learning opportunity that was enjoyed and promoted pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. The wider curriculum is also developed effectively, engaging many pupils with opportunities of a musical, creative or sporting nature, for example, and often this is

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supported by strong links with external providers, as is the provision for pupils with additional needs. The breakfast club also gets the day off to a positive start for those who attend enthusiastically. A parent said 'The club is an important resource for working parents and runs very effectively. There is a good range of activities to participate in'.

Although the school's outcomes are judged satisfactory, as they were at the last inspection, this masks significant improvement. Leaders and managers have improved the school a lot, the turbulence that resulted from staff changes. Since the staffing situation was resolved, new systems have become embedded and significant improvements made to teaching and progress. However, taken over the full period of time since the last inspection, progress and teaching remain satisfactory. Improvements have resulted from very accurate self-evaluation and a clear vision for improvement, together with the commitment of staff and the care taken to evaluate outcomes of any initiative help. There is now a strong capacity to sustain improvement.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Laurence Church Junior School, Birmingham, B31 2DJ

Thank you for the wonderful welcome you gave us when we carried out our recent inspection. Thank you to those who talked to us and filled out our questionnaire. It was very useful to have your views. We found that you go to a satisfactory school that has made lots of recent improvements.

We were particularly impressed by your positive behaviour and the way in which you relate to each other irrespective of backgrounds and your ability to listen to and respect the ideas of others. You, obviously, enjoy your work and Year 6 looked splendid dressed as if they were living during the Second World War. Because you know your targets, you know that you are making progress. Teachers can track your progress much better than was once the case. Everyone, children and adults, told us what a good headteacher Mrs Lindsay is and she has played a big part in improving the school since she arrived. However, all teachers and support staff play a positive and committed role because they want you to do well and ensure you do your best.

We have asked the school to have a look at a few ways in which it can continue to improve. We think that your Year 3 teachers should work more closely with the teachers in Year 2 at the infant school so they know better what to expect of you when you arrive. We think also that, in lessons, teachers should ensure they give you the maximum time for working without them talking for too long. They could also involve you more in working out how you judge if a lesson has been successful and could use ICT more to make lessons even more interesting. For those who need a bit more help, we are also asking that teachers ensure they check progress with great care. If you continue to show such positive commitment, you will certainly be playing your part in helping the school to become even better.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Groucutt
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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