

St Leonard's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108846
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	377828
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Gibbons
Headteacher	Peter Gair
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2009
School address	Tunstall Village Road Silksworth Sunderland SR3 2BB
Telephone number	0191 5536288
Fax number	0191 5536290
Email address	st.leonards.primary@schools.sunderland.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons, taught by six class teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body and spoke to staff and groups of pupils. They analysed 69 questionnaire responses from parents and carers and looked at questionnaires from staff and pupils. The inspectors also looked at: pupils' progress and achievement data; intervention and support programmes; documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils; school policies; and plans for improving the quality of learning. They scrutinised pupils' current and past work and spoke to the former School Improvement Partner to discuss her reports.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of learning and the rate of progress made by all groups of pupils, especially the more-able and in developing their literacy skills.
- The quality of teaching and its effectiveness in accelerating the rate of pupils' progress, raising attainment and boosting achievement and tackling any pockets of relative underachievement.
- The extent to which senior leaders are demonstrating the capacity to drive and sustain improvements to achieve their ambitions.

Information about the school

St Leonards is smaller than the average primary school. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage with no pupils at the early stages of learning English. A below-average proportion of pupils than nationally is known to be eligible for free school meals. An average number of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but none has a statement of special educational needs.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Leonards is a satisfactory and steadily-improving school. It provides good care, guidance and support, which contributes to its warm, friendly atmosphere and makes a decisive contribution to the pupils' happiness and enjoyment of school life. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their views. One parent's comment summed up the views of many, 'The school promotes a friendly, fun, disciplined learning environment for my child, who loves coming to school'. Parents and carers especially appreciate how effectively their children are kept safe.

The starting points of most children on joining the school are broadly typical for their age, although a few do have weaknesses in their speech and language. By the end of Year 6, attainment is typically average overall, although it is higher in mathematics than in English. Historically, more-able pupils have relatively underachieved in writing. Despite improvements the school acknowledges that this remains an area for improvement. Although progress is satisfactory overall, there are signs of a much faster rate of progress emerging in most lessons. Significantly, staffing is more settled after a lengthy period when there were many staff changes. In those lessons where faster progress is made, expectations of what pupils can achieve are high, activities are carefully-matched to abilities and approaches are more active and engaging. Where progress is slower, approaches are less thought-provoking, questioning does not probe understanding sufficiently and opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to explain their answers and take responsibility for their own learning. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. An increasing number is making good progress, because teachers' intervention and support is effectively targeted. In individual cases, intervention and support is highly effective. Pupils' progress is systematically checked and the assessments made are increasingly accurate. Frequent and positive marking is helpful, although written detailed advice for further improvement is not provided consistently. Pupils are keen to learn and this is evident in their improving attendance and good and often exemplary behaviour, especially amongst older pupils. This is because the school sets clear boundaries and high expectations for pupils' conduct.

The quiet determination of the headteacher and the total commitment of staff underpin school improvements. The governing body provides much support and the impact of its quality checking is strengthening. The school's self-evaluation correctly identifies strengths and improvement planning captures key priorities to enrich

learning. Middle leadership is increasingly confident and effective. Consequently, the school has a satisfactory and strengthening capacity for continuous improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress to at least good and boost achievement, particularly in the writing of more-able pupils, by ensuring that:
 - the expectations of what pupils can achieve are raised even further in all lessons
 - pupils' are relentlessly challenged to explain their ideas and justify their answers.

- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
 - increasing the use of innovative approaches to inspire and provoke pupils' thinking and build upon their understanding even more
 - providing sufficient opportunities for pupils, especially the more-able, to write for different purposes and audiences in a range of subjects
 - ensuring that pupils are actively involved in the management of their own learning
 - making certain that teachers' written feedback consistently details exactly how pupils can improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils are keen to learn and are responding positively to the activities provided, as teaching is increasingly more sharply-focused on promoting all pupils' good achievement. Rates of progress are quickening, but not consistently across all ability groups and subjects. Consequently, progress is only satisfactory. When approaches are more inspiring and questioning constantly challenges understanding, progress is accelerating quite speedily, for example, when pupils are asked to describe their emotions and feelings approaching a haunted house in the dark. School information and inspection evidence show that overall, the vast majority of current Year 6 pupils are on target to achieve at least the levels expected of them, with the attainment gap in writing closing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. However, their rate of progress is now accelerating more rapidly, because intervention effectively pinpoints the individual help and support they need.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the happy friendly atmosphere, where there is a strong focus on all pupils considering the feelings of others. For example, older pupils each adopt a special friend in the Reception class. The very large majority of pupils attend regularly, with the numbers of persistent absentees down to average levels, as a result of the concerted efforts of staff. Pupils are confident, feel safe and report that bullying is rare. They

understand the benefits of keeping active and fit and eating healthily. Pupils thrive on the responsibility they are given, for example, organising their own charity collections, such as for 'Help the Heroes'. They happily join in community and parish events, such as singing carols at the local old people's home. Pupils' developing ability to apply their skills to all their work and their positive personal qualities prepare them satisfactorily for secondary school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school's strong commitment to providing high-quality care for all its pupils provides a positive climate in which pupils can make at least satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but there is an increasing incidence of good teaching, as staff adopt more imaginative approaches to inspire thinking and expect more from pupils. In the best lessons, activities are challenging, because they are well-matched to the pupils' abilities and interests. For example, a pupil was observed totally absorbed completing his planning grid to describe the experience of winning a cash prize on a television game show. Consequently, progress quickens and achievement and enjoyment are boosted. Occasionally, too much time is spent on the same task, such as sitting on the floor at the start of a lesson, which can lead to individual pupils losing concentration and becoming restless. Challenging targets are set and marking is constructive, but feedback does not always provide well-defined steps of how pupils can achieve their targets.

The satisfactory curriculum is improving as it becomes a better match to the abilities and needs of all pupils. The developing use of themes to link subjects together is increasing pupils' motivation to learn, adding to their enjoyment. The richness of their learning is enhanced by effective partnership-working with local schools, for example, by providing guitar and French language sessions. Activities to augment pupils' personal experiences, for example, learning about village life in India from a group of local parishioners, add to the variety of learning. However, insufficient

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

opportunities are provided for pupils to write for different audiences and purposes in a range of subjects.

The good care, guidance and support which the pupils receive are clear strengths of the school. Staff can point to striking examples in helping pupils overcome difficulties and barriers to enable them to achieve success. Parents and carers appreciate the ease with which they can approach staff with a problem or a concern. Positive links with specialist support agencies and the effective deployment of the pastoral support worker make an effective contribution in engaging families, including those in challenging circumstances, for example, by improving attendance and fostering greater family involvement in their children's learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, ably supported by the governing body, has worked diligently during a period of high staff turnover to provide a clear direction for improvement. An increasingly effective staff team shares a common commitment to helping the school improve. Inconsistencies in the pattern and rate of pupils' progress and achievement are being addressed systematically. As a result, rates of progress are quickening more consistently and attainment is rising. Information about pupils' progress is being used more and more effectively to enrich the quality of pupils' learning. All the pupils are given an equal chance to achieve success and play together in harmony. There is an absence of discrimination and the school is working hard to eliminate variations in the achievement of different pupil groups. Self-evaluation is accurate and correctly identifies priorities for improvement.

Good partnership working with the local community, local schools, the parish church and local authority specialists, contribute well to the improving quality of learning. The positive relationships with parents and carers add to the strong sense of family. Safeguarding procedures and requirements are met, with pupils' care and welfare practice being a strength. The governing body is active and supportive and its work is beginning to be more sharply-focused upon ensuring that actions taken by senior leaders are the right ones. The growing confidence and expertise of middle leaders is enhancing the quality of self-evaluation. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily with a developing range of experiences broadening the pupils' understanding of the diverse world in which they live.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account:	
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although children experience a variety of pre-school experiences, most children arrive in Reception with skills broadly those expected for their age. A few children occasionally have underdeveloped speech and language. All children make good progress from their start points, in all areas of their development. By the time they enter Year 1, nearly all children are working towards the goals expected of them, with an increasing proportion exceeding what is expected. Staff place firm emphasis on developing early confidence and independence, for example, by encouraging children to explore and describe for themselves, when hunting for the bears outside.

Children's frequent, intensive and enjoyable practising of sounds and letters promotes their good early reading and writing skills. Increasingly, all activities are exploited to enable children to apply these skills, for example, through writing their own invitations for a party. Adult questioning probes children's knowledge well and provokes their curiosity. Staff are imaginative in their approaches and work hard to create opportunities for children to find things out for themselves, both indoors and outside. Their excellent behaviour is characterised by their friendly, thoughtful and helpful attitudes when playing together. Everyday observations are recorded in each child's learning development folder, although the positive relationship staff have with parents and carers is not always exploited enough to ensure that they play an active role in their children's learning and development. Assessments are systematic and accurate. Welfare requirements are fully met and effective care practice is a strength of the provision. The growing confidence and skills of leaders and managers are evident in the developing range and quality of stimulating activities, all of which are carefully matched to the individual needs of children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Just under one third of parents and carers returned the questionnaires to express their views of the school. This is in line with the national average level of returns for primary schools. Almost all parents and carers are happy with their children's school experience, feel that their children enjoy school and think that their children are kept safe. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school, spoke to staff and pupils and scrutinised behavioural records. The evidence gathered during the inspection indicated that behaviour is good. During the inspection, inspectors observed teachers dealing with any minor incidents very effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Leonard's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 189 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	65	23	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	68	21	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	55	26	38	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	54	25	36	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	59	22	32	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	54	28	41	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	52	30	43	2	3	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	34	49	28	41	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	58	24	35	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	52	26	38	4	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	45	31	45	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	57	25	36	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	67	20	29	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



29 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Leonard's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sunderland SR3 2BB

I want to thank you all for the warm and friendly welcome that you gave the other inspectors and me when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our time talking to you.

St Leonard's is a satisfactory and improving school, which has a number of strengths. We were pleased by your sensible and responsible behaviour and the good care taken of you all. You obviously feel safe and happy because of this. The school enjoys successful partnership-working with other local schools and the local community. This helps to make your work more interesting. You understand well the benefits that a healthy lifestyle can bring. You take pride in making decisions to improve your school and enthusiastically join in all school activities. Your school is taking positive action to improve and this can be seen in your faster progress and improving skills.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and the governing body to look at more ways of helping you to improve your work and make even faster progress. We would like staff to expect more of you, particularly in writing, and increase the amount of learning that is fun to excite and interest you even more. We have asked that when your work is marked, you are provided with more detailed help to improve. We also think that you should take more responsibility for organising your work. Lastly, we have asked that teachers make certain that your tasks make you think even harder and always expect you to explain your ideas and your solutions to problems.

You can all play your part by working as hard as you can. Thank you for helping with this inspection.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Petts
Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.