

St Lawrence's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108509
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	377769
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2012
Lead 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Cunningham
Headteacher	Bernadette Lamb
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Clive Petts
Kevin Dodd

Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons taught by nine class teachers. They also observed intervention activities for small groups of pupils, talked to different groups of pupils about their learning and scrutinised in detail the work in pupils' books. Inspectors checked pupils' reading, across the age range. In addition, inspectors held discussions with pupils, members of the governing body, staff, and the school achievement partner. The inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation, including the school's records relating to pupils' progress and achievement, evidence relating to leadership and management, monitoring and evaluation, records of behaviour and safeguarding. They took into account also the questionnaires returned by 45 parents and carers, 76 pupils, and 16 staff.

Information about the school

St Lawrence's is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a few at the early stage of learning English. Almost three times the average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. There is a greater number of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable than is found in many schools. In 2011, the school did not meet the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has succeeded in gaining the International School, Healthy Schools, and Active Sport awards.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- St Lawrence’s is a good school. Good leadership sets high expectations for what every pupil can achieve. Consequently, pupils’ engagement is outstanding and achievement is good. The school’s continuing success stems from the high quality of care and support pupils receive, which all parents and carers appreciate greatly. The school is not yet outstanding because teaching is not outstanding and self-evaluation should be sharpened.
- Children enter school with skills levels significantly lower than expected for their age. They make rapid progress in the friendly school atmosphere. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, and pupils who speak English as an additional language, often, make outstanding progress, because the support for them is so effective. By the time pupils leave Year 6, attainment is typically average and pupils are well prepared for secondary school.
- The quality of teaching is good and, sometimes, outstanding. Imaginative approaches make the most of the highly stimulating curricular experiences which capture and hold the interest of pupils. Classroom intervention and improvement programmes are effectively ensuring pupils of all abilities thrive.
- Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school. They are polite and considerate towards each other. Relationships with staff are excellent, with much mutual respect evident in classrooms. Pupils’ behaviour and their attitudes to learning are exemplary. As a consequence of excellent provision, pupils’ spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is outstanding.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher’s quiet determination and clear vision create a shared sense of purpose. Teaching is led effectively. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school’s strengths and areas for improvement, but monitoring, self-evaluation, and recording are not consistently focused on the impact of action taken to improve pupils’ learning even more.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen leaders' approaches to improve the good teaching practice to outstanding by:
 - developing a more systematic approach to monitoring and recording the impact of school improvement priorities
 - increasing the rigour of self-evaluation to ensure actions taken have the intended impact on pupils' achievement.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils are keen and attentive in lessons. They enjoy particularly the many fun, practical activities, such as the lively daily sessions learning how letters and sounds are linked to form words. That helps them to listen carefully and speak and write more fluently. Older pupils, particularly, relish the many first-hand experiences they encounter. For example, travelling on a bus dressed as child evacuees complete with gas masks to nearby Beamish Museum. Consequently, the pupils' good achievement is enhanced continuously. All parents and carers agree that their children are making good progress, because their particular needs are met so well. The school's strong focus on promoting reading and writing, employing rich learning experiences, improves skills rapidly, especially those of boys. Pupils often exhibit high levels of engagement, reflecting their enjoyment of the activities and tasks arranged for them.

Children arrive in the Nursery class with underdeveloped speech, language, social, and emotional skills. The high expectations, added to the happy atmosphere, ensure children make rapid progress, settling confidently into classroom routines and developing independence and self-control. Pupils carry on making good progress in Key Stage 1, although overall attainment at the end of Year 2 is still below average. Typically, in Key Stage 2, progress accelerates, with particularly speedy progress in Years 5 and 6, to reach average attainment and a little higher in English and mathematics. Despite that, in the 2011 Year 6 tests, exceptional circumstances in the cohort resulted in a fall in overall attainment to below the floor standards. Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, and listening to pupils read confirm the evidence in school's own tracking data that attainment is now average. Unvalidated national test results demonstrate that current Year 6 is on target to exceed current floor standards comfortably. Increased proportions of pupils are on course to achieve higher levels in reading and writing, evidence of the successful drive to improve the attainment of more-able pupils.

Thorough checking of pupils' development, across different groups, provides a successful foundation for intervention to strengthen basic skills. It ensures that all pupils are given the opportunity to achieve at least well. That includes those known to be eligible for free school meals. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and, in individual cases, exceptional progress. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language make swift progress and achieve highly, because they are made so welcome and activities are matched skilfully to their needs.

Attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 is broadly average. Younger pupils demonstrate skill combining letters and sounds to make sense of new words. In Year 6, good progress is being made fostering an interest and enjoyment of reading. Pupils discuss an author's style

confidently and display a good insight into the themes used in a range of novels. With the exception of 2011, pupils leave school with average attainment in reading.

Quality of teaching

All parents and carers agree that the quality of teaching is good. All staff enjoy excellent relationships with pupils, who respond enthusiastically to the demands that are set for them. Together, they make a strong contribution to pupils' good achievement. Teachers assess pupils frequently and accurately. That enables staff to plan activities and questions that are matched extremely well to pupils' abilities and needs. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of their individual learning targets and what they need to do to achieve them. As a result, disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, and those at the early stages of learning English are taught and supported well, enabling them to make often rapid progress and close attainment gaps. Early reading and writing are taught well and opportunities are rarely missed to allow pupils to practise their skills. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, regular progress checks are made to organise children into small groups of similar abilities and interests in order to support purposeful play and exploration. Appropriate personalised sessions are organised for individual pupils at risk of falling behind, or who need an extra help or challenge.

Outstanding teaching is characterised by brisk pace, imaginative approaches which capture interest, and individual questioning that continually tests pupils' knowledge and extends their understanding. For example, in a Year 3 class, pupils' learning was outstanding because they were observed totally absorbed in discussing how Ben Johnson broke his Olympic oath by using performance-enhancing substances. Good use is made of new technology to add to the variety of learning, such as visiting a crime scene mock-up at the nearby City Learning Centre, taking samples of blood for testing. In the few lessons when progress slows a little, the good features are not evident so consistently, or the rich curriculum opportunities not exploited relentlessly. Frequent opportunities are provided for pupils to work independently and exchange their ideas and views with a partner. That leads to pupils being self-confident and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development exceptionally well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The very strong spiritual, moral, and social ethos of the school underpins the pupils' exceptional contribution to the positive climate for learning. Pupils thrive in the atmosphere of mutual respect, pride, and enjoyment. Pupils' exemplary behaviour, including of those who are potentially vulnerable, is typified by their sensible and cooperative attitudes in and out of lessons. Pupils report that lessons are rarely interrupted by inappropriate behaviour, creating a calm and purposeful working mood in classrooms. Pupils participate willingly in the tasks provided for them. Together with their much-improved, above-average attendance and punctuality, these positive qualities reinforce their excellent spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Almost all parents and carers agree that behaviour is at least good and that lessons are very rarely disrupted. Inspection evidence confirms that very positive view of the high levels of commitment, politeness, and excellent behaviour. Scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions show that behaviour is exemplary over time too.

Pupils enjoy the rewards and benefits that their thoughtful and considerate behaviour brings. In discussions, pupils demonstrate a very good grasp of what constitutes bullying. They describe confidently how they would deal with any disputes themselves, or seek the

help of staff to discuss any worries or concerns, when necessary. Pupils talk knowledgeably about how to keep themselves safe and avoid risk and danger. Older pupils talk impressively about minimising risk when using the internet and their mobile 'phones. Pupils of all ages thrive on the responsibilities given to them and older pupils take particular pride in their successful suggestions and ideas that make a positive contribution to school improvement.

Leadership and management

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher, ably supported by two assistant headteachers, has worked reflectively and resolutely to eradicate pockets of inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Performance management and professional development contribute effectively to improvements in raising pupils' attainment and closing gaps. A tightly knit team of staff share her aspirations and this cohesive team work extremely hard to remove potential barriers to the pupils' learning and well-being. Consequently, the school displays a good capacity for improvement. Teachers and support staff demonstrate a good understanding of how to use assessment of pupils' development to pinpoint slips and gaps, ensuring a relentless focus on achievement. For example, accelerating boys' progress to make certain that reading skills are closer to those expected for their age. The excellent curriculum provides a wide range of varied first-hand experiences, which are exploited imaginatively to develop personal skills and encourage application of their literacy and numeracy skills. Also, it includes extending and enriching the curriculum in areas such as science and technology. An extensive range of enrichment activities and high-quality partnership working broadens pupils' outlook and understanding of the world beyond their immediate community. That is evident in their excellent cultural development.

The knowledgeable and committed governing body is fully involved in the life of the school and is very aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. Senior leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to equality and take positive steps to ensure all pupils can achieve success. Reasons for the fall in attainment in 2011 were scrutinised carefully by senior leaders. The school is not complacent, however, and senior leaders have well-defined plans to tackle areas identified as priorities for continued improvement. Yet, on a few occasions, there is insufficient rigour in monitoring, evaluating and recording the impact of actions to improve the quality of learning and boost achievement even more. As a result, actions planned to eliminate pockets of inconsistency, sometimes, lack a sharp enough focus to ensure outstanding practice becomes a consistent feature of all work. Safeguarding meets requirements, with exemplary child protection practice underpinning the high quality of care and support provided for the pupils. The school engages parents and carers very well and enjoys their confidence and trust. Parents and carers are involved increasingly in improving their own aspirations and skills to support their children's learning ever more effectively.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



12 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Lawrence's RC Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE6 2JX

We want to thank you all for the extremely friendly welcome that you gave the inspection team when we visited your school to see how well you were learning. We, thoroughly, enjoyed our time talking to you.

St Lawrence's is a good school. We were impressed with the excellent relationships your school has with your parents and carers and the way your staff, constantly, encourage and support you to work hard and achieve well. We were pleased by your exemplary behaviour and the high-quality care and support that you receive. In discussions, it was obvious you feel exceptionally safe and take much pride being a part of your school.

The headteacher and the governing body have taken positive action to ensure that the school continues to improve. That can be seen in the many interesting activities provided for you and your often-rapid progress in your reading, writing and mathematics. We were pleased boys are catching up with girls in their reading. We have asked the headteacher to improve the quality of the checking of your development and progress in all lessons. We have also asked the headteacher to make certain that an accurate record is kept of what is most successful in lessons and what can be improved. You can all play your part by attending regularly and continuing to work as hard as you can.

All the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts
Lead Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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