



St Leonard's Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124199
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281658
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector David Driscoll AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Leonard's Avenue
School category	Community		Stafford
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Staffordshire ST17 4LT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01785 356890
Number on roll	238	Fax number	01785 356893
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Ian Wise
Date of previous inspection	20 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Jobling

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Leonard's is an average sized primary school. It is similar in make up to most other primary schools, although few pupils come from minority ethnic groups and all are fluent in English. The school has had several changes in leadership, including the headteacher and almost all governors, since the previous inspection.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education. Teachers are now ensuring that pupils are making up the ground lost in previous years, particularly in their writing. Pupils make satisfactory progress to leave with average standards. Pupils often make good progress in writing lessons, but are not yet getting enough opportunities to practise their basic skills, including their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, in other lessons. In some lessons, the pace is slowed by the teacher talking for too long and not allowing the pupils to do things for themselves. Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well and enjoy their education. They are happy and safe at school, because of the good quality of care and support provided. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Pupils join with standards that are average, make satisfactory progress and are ready to start Year 1 with average standards. The pupils now make satisfactory progress and standards are in line with the national average, which is an improvement on the situation in 2003, when standards were below average and there was evidence of widespread underachievement. In the past, the school did not have the necessary systems in place for identifying weaknesses in its performance and actions, to stem the decline happening at that time, were not taken quickly enough by the school's leaders. This resulted in a slower improvement than was required. However, standards are now improving rapidly under the good leadership of the current headteacher, and the effects of previous underachievement are being reversed effectively. The school's view of its performance is accurate and matches that of the inspectors. The current managers have demonstrated the capacity to improve, as shown in the way that the weaknesses have been identified and actions taken have ensured that pupils achieved satisfactory standards. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the amount learnt in lessons by ensuring that teachers do not talk for too long and give the pupils more opportunities to be independent.
- Give pupils more opportunities to practice their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects.
- Ensure that the new systems in place to check the school's performance are used rigorously and consistently to avoid repetition of past weaknesses.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress in all years, regardless of their background or ability. They join and leave the school with average standards. This pattern has not always been the case. At the time of the previous inspection, pupils made good progress and left with above average standards. By 2003, standards had declined to below average and widespread underachievement was evident. The pupils currently in the school still show signs of not having made enough progress in the past. Their progress in writing has been particularly slow. Under the leadership of the new headteacher, efforts have

been focused on improving standards of writing and mathematics, particularly for pupils in Year 6. Last year, pupils made good progress overall when in Year 6, so the school was able to meet its appropriately challenging targets. Pupils currently in Year 6 also progress well. They are making up the ground they have lost in the past and are on course to meet their targets. The picture of falling standards followed by improvement is also seen in other years. Standards in Year 2 declined from well above average to below average in writing, but now pupils in this year group are making satisfactory progress and standards have improved to average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy learning, behave well and relate warmly with adults and each other, for example when applauding other pupils and a teacher acting as animals and a monster respectively, in assembly. Pupils are becoming much more prepared to persevere with their work. Staff and pupils give each other good support, and older pupils act as playground friends. The few pupils with specific behavioural needs respond positively. Pupils show good attitudes in lessons and say, 'This school is on the up, we are learning how to co-operate and bond together'. Attendance is satisfactory, but a handful of pupils take holidays in term time. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils reflect meaningfully in assemblies and religious education lessons and show good cultural awareness. Pupils express views and undertake responsibility diligently, as members of the school council, house captains, and helping with equipment at playtimes. Pupils demonstrate good awareness of safe practice. They contribute well to local and wider communities, fundraising for charities, singing carols to the elderly and complaining to the local council about footpaths. Pupils develop appropriate understanding of how to stay healthy and are equipped satisfactorily for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school, so pupils make satisfactory progress. One very good feature is the way teachers are making significant improvement to pupils' writing. Teaching of these skills is based on improving the foundations of good writing and is making a significant impact on improving them. The work is intensive and carefully planned to build upon what the pupils already understand. This aspect of teaching is ensuring that pupils are making up for the lack of progress in the past. Although the teaching of writing is carried out at a good pace, other lessons are sometimes dominated by the teacher talking for too long. This leads to pupils being over-reliant on the teacher, even asking for permission to turn the page. When the pupils work in smaller groups, pupils with learning difficulties often work well because teaching assistants keep them on task and give them just the right amount of support, without doing the work for them. Other groups also do well when under the direct

supervision of the teacher. Those working on their own, however, are not always self-confident enough to take decisions for themselves about what to do next, so their pace of learning drops. This is equally true of the Foundation Stage, where teachers could provide more opportunities for pupils to make decisions and initiate activities for themselves.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, including for children in the Foundation Stage. It has appropriate breadth and balance and meets national requirements. Pupils appreciate the increasing opportunities to learn practically, for example through investigation, but would like more work that draws on skills and knowledge of more than one subject and where they can work independently. Children in the Foundation Stage would also benefit from more opportunities to learn by using their own initiative, especially outdoors. Staff are adjusting the curriculum further to promote more creativity and enjoyment for the pupils, for example guiding pupils in caring for the environment. However, ICT, literacy and numeracy are not developed to best effect in other subjects. A good range of clubs especially sports, widens the pupils' learning opportunities. In addition, older pupils organise clubs, such as dance for themselves and these enrich the pupils' experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, support and guidance are good for all pupils. All pupils' safety and welfare, including child protection, are promoted well. Personal, social and health education, through circle-time discussions in class and moral and social guidance in assembly, is good. When interviewed, a pupil on the school council stated, "I don't want to leave this school because I know everyone and there's always someone to help". Teachers and support staff promote good behaviour and attendance. Pupils with learning difficulties, including a few with behavioural needs, receive good support. Individual education plans are particularly good, giving pupils very clear guidance on what they need to do in language they can understand. The support is most effective for pupils with behavioural problems. Assessment, especially teachers' marking, is improving. It provides pupils with good personal advice and satisfactory guidance for improving their academic standards. Pupils are increasingly encouraged to offer strategies for solving problems in lessons and suggest ideas to improve the school through the school council. Most parents, especially those with children who have learning needs, are supportive in helping with their children's education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school went into decline after the previous inspection and it also fell behind other schools in implementing national

initiatives, such as the performance management of teachers. The school did not have the necessary systems in place for identifying weaknesses in its performance. Leaders, including governors, did not take effective actions quickly enough to improve the situation, so improvement since the previous inspection has been inadequate. Now, the school is improving rapidly, under the good leadership of the current headteacher, and standards are rising. The key to the school's recent improvement has been the way the headteacher has been able to clearly identify the main weaknesses and used the strengths of middle managers to address them. Data has been used particularly well to pinpoint where the most urgent improvements are necessary. The school now has a clear view of its performance, and this matches the view of the inspectors. Subsequent actions have proved effective in ensuring that pupils leave the school with satisfactory standards of attainment. However, some of the actions taken by the current leaders, especially those at middle management level, have not had sufficient time to have a clear impact on standards. As a result, the school is not yet providing the same good education evident at the previous inspection. Managers make good use of parents' views to measure the impact of the steps taken to improve the school. They regularly consult parents and carry out a statistical analysis of the results to make sure they are improving. Parents especially identify the improvements made since the current headteacher was appointed. The school has the capacity to improve in the future.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Children As you know, we visited your school recently to check on how well it is doing. Thank you very much for talking to us, and a special thank you to the members of the school council who told us about your life at school. We think you behave well and are very polite to visitors. We were most impressed by the way you have started a campaign to keep your footpath open, so you can walk to school safely. You told us that you like coming to school and we can see why. The grown-ups take good care of you and help you when you need it. The teachers, and the other grown-ups, make sure that you catch up on any work that you may have not have done in the past. Some of you could still do more for yourselves, without waiting for the teacher's help, so we have asked them to let you work by yourselves more often. We have also asked them to let you practise your writing and maths in other subjects, and use the computers more often. Your headteacher and others who run the school know how well the school is doing and how well you are learning. We have asked them to make sure that the school keeps getting better and to keep a close check that improvements are successful. Thank you again for helping us with our work and giving us a very enjoyable visit. Yours faithfully Mr Driscoll Lead Inspector