



St Leonard's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123179
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 295306
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Keith Williams

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Overthorpe Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Banbury
Age range of pupils	3–11		OX16 4SB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01295 262507
Number on roll (school)	451	Fax number	01295 275849
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Lesley Edmonds
		Headteacher	Mrs Sally Godden / Mrs Lesley Alcorn
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2006		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007	Inspection number 295306
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The pupils at this large, over-subscribed primary school are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups being those of White British and Pakistani heritage. Many more pupils are at the early stages of learning English than in most schools. This proportion, and the range of home languages, is increasing. Pupils come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds and the proportion eligible for free school meals is about average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, including those with a Statement of Special Educational Need, is higher than usually found. The leadership of the school is shared between two headteachers. Children in Foundation Stage 2 are housed off-site in the nearby East Street Centre. The school was given a Notice to Improve, when it was last inspected in January 2006, in relation to pupils' achievement and standards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Leonard's is an improving school that provides a satisfactory standard of education and has good features. The school has worked determinedly and successfully to tackle the weaknesses identified in its last inspection. As a result, standards are rising and pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average. In addition, almost half are at an early stage of learning English when they first start school. Good teaching and provision in the Foundation Stage mean that children achieve well, although standards are below those usually found. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. A combination of good leadership from the joint headteachers and core subject co-ordinators, improvements to teaching and the monitoring of pupils' progress means that underachievement in Key Stage 2 has been tackled successfully. The school leaders have worked well with staff to increase the proportion of good or outstanding lessons, which means that the rate of progress made by pupils is accelerating. This is particularly so for pupils in Year 6, who achieve well. The school recognises that more remains to be done to ensure that standards continue to rise, particularly in writing and mathematics. Many of the improvements to teaching are new and are not yet firmly established and the school leaders are striving to secure consistency, for example, in marking. Older pupils are appropriately involved in assessing their own performance, but this is not yet carried out consistently across the school.

Improvements in the way the school checks on how groups and individual pupils are progressing have been instrumental in raising standards and achievement. This is because the school is able to identify those at risk of underachievement, provide them with the support they need and set challenging targets for improvement. Consequently, all groups of pupils, regardless of gender, ability or background achieve satisfactorily. The previous underachievement amongst pupils of Pakistani background has been successfully addressed. Pupils are organised in groups of similar ability for literacy and numeracy and the arrangements vary from year-to-year. These groupings are helping teachers to ensure that they provide work with the right amount of challenge or support, but the leaders acknowledge that they need to keep a closer check on the impact of these arrangements on all pupils' progress.

Pupils have responded well to teachers' raised expectations. Their personal development is good, they work hard, concentrate well and their excellent behaviour contributes to invariably calm, purposeful and productive lessons. They enjoy their time in school and benefit from a good curriculum that offers a wide range of opportunities to write in other subjects. Taking account of the headteachers' accurate view of the school's performance, their success in tackling weaknesses, the rising standards and pupils' satisfactory achievement, the leaders have good capacity to secure further improvement. Parents are supportive of the school's work, one speaking for many when commenting, 'I cannot praise the school and staff enough and am extremely grateful to them'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Reduce inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Keep a regular check on the impact of the varied groupings on pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Underachievement in Key Stage 2, identified in the last inspection, has been tackled well. Consequently, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards, while below average, are rising. This is reflected in the improvement in the 2006 test results for pupils in Year 6. These results show that standards are moving closer to the national average and, taken overall, they represent a satisfactory level of achievement for those pupils. The results in English were particularly notable; having been exceptionally low in 2005 they were broadly average in 2006. Results improved because of a concerted whole-school focus on raising standards in English, including pupils' speaking and listening.

The school is rightly extending its attention to mathematics. School data, and the pupils' work, show that those currently in Year 6 are achieving well and are on track to continue this improvement. Results for seven year olds in reading and mathematics rose in 2006 although they fell in writing. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well because they are well taught. Pupils who are new to learning English are appropriately supported and make good progress in learning the language. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities, and pupils with behavioural or emotional problems, make good progress towards the targets set out in their individual plans. This enables them to achieve as well as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils respond well to the school's Christian ethos, one saying, 'The atmosphere in school is very friendly and the teachers are great'. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and their mature attitudes mean that they try hard and concentrate well. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is average, although a small minority of parents do not ensure that their children attend regularly and some families continue to take extended holidays in term-time. Pupils are proud of their school and explain that the rare incidents of bullying or racism are dealt with swiftly. They know where to find help with their work or if they feel upset. They understand the importance of making healthy choices. Pupils feel that their views and ideas are taken seriously and participate well in raising money for a range of charities. The school council takes its responsibilities conscientiously and members are pleased with their role in helping the school to improve.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and are improving. Teaching is most effective in the Foundation Stage and Years 5 and 6. Throughout the school, a good working atmosphere is created; pupils are well motivated and try hard. They are benefiting from increasing amounts of good and, sometimes, outstanding teaching and, in these lessons, their rate of progress accelerates. Teachers' raised expectations are ensuring that pupils are challenged to do well although, occasionally, work is not matched carefully enough to the needs of all pupils. There is an increased emphasis on ensuring that pupils understand what they are expected to learn. Teachers develop pupils' speaking and listening well, by encouraging discussion with partners and in groups and by asking probing questions, although these opportunities are sometimes missed. Well-directed and capable teaching assistants contribute effectively to the teaching of individuals and groups of pupils with language or learning needs. Rigorous assessments are used to track all pupils' progress and provide extra help where it is needed. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of marking of pupils' work, although it still varies in quality and consistency. In the best examples, particularly in the oldest classes, pupils are given a clear idea of how they can improve their work. Similarly, older pupils have regular opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers, but this is not yet consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The school is committed to including all pupils in all activities, whatever their background, ability, gender or experience of English. Pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are given a high priority. The planning for writing has improved, and the school is aware of the need to develop this by extending the links between subjects. Pupils' personal development is promoted well. A good emphasis is placed on promoting pupils' health and fitness and they are taught about relationships and the benefits and potentially damaging effects of drugs. The school draws well on the expertise of outside agencies to support this work. The curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors. This is appreciated by pupils and their parents, one parent commenting, 'The choir is fantastic with lots of after-school clubs and activities'. These are well attended, extend pupils' interests and develop their skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care, guidance and support. There are thorough procedures for vetting staff, protecting those who are vulnerable and ensuring the health and safety of all pupils. One parent commented that she 'never has a moments

doubt about leaving my children here'. Well-organised support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is targeted on their particular needs. Good use is made of bilingual assistants to ensure that pupils learning English as an additional language have good access to the curriculum. Where specific support is not available, for the increasing range of languages represented, the school makes good efforts to utilise voluntary help from parents and others to assess pupils' capabilities and to translate key vocabulary for them. Academic guidance has improved and is now good. Comprehensive assessment and tracking systems are used well to provide pupils with individual 'challenges' (targets). As a result, pupils have an increasing sense of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory and there are some key strengths. The joint headteachers provide good leadership and, with good support from the core subject co-ordinators, this has been instrumental in the school's improvement. They have galvanised staff so that there is a shared commitment to raising standards and improving teaching and learning. Areas of weakness, including the underachievement identified in the last inspection, have been tackled robustly. A close check is kept on teaching and learning and test data and other assessments are analysed thoughtfully. Governors understand their strategic role and are becoming increasingly able to challenge the senior leaders and hold them to account. The local authority's 'intensifying support programme', including the rigorous tracking of pupils' progress, has been embraced fully, so that the leaders have a clear idea of how well pupils are doing and who would benefit from extra help. The leaders are not complacent, however, and they recognise that there is still more to be done to secure greater consistency in teaching and accelerate pupils' progress further. The grouping of pupils by ability for literacy and numeracy is helping teachers to plan work that is relevant to pupils' needs but, at present, there are no formal systems for gauging the impact of these groupings on pupils' learning.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with many of you and you gave us lots of helpful information. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy school and feel that your work is getting better. We agree. Your headteachers, staff and governors have worked hard to deal with the weaknesses that were found when your school was last inspected. Your school is now satisfactory and we agree with your teachers and many of your parents that it is improving all the time. Your teachers keep a much closer check on how well you are doing, so that they can give extra help to those of you who need it and set you 'challenges'. We can see from your books and your lessons that this is working because your work is improving. Those of you in Foundation Stage and Year 6 are doing particularly well.

The staff take good care of you and many of you told us that you feel safe and have an adult to talk to if you are worried. We agree with you that your teachers give you lots of interesting things to learn. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Well done! This is one of the reasons why your school is improving. Your headteachers, teachers and governors have a good idea of how well your school is doing and they know what needs to be done to make sure it keeps on getting better. We are sure that you will do everything you can to help them.

There are three things that we have asked them to do. Your teachers need to make sure that your work continues to improve, especially in writing and mathematics. They have been working hard to make sure that more of your lessons are good ones and they need to keep doing this. We have also asked your headteachers and governors to keep a close check on how well your groups in literacy and numeracy are working.

Once again, thank you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed being in your school and we wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Williams Lead inspector