

St Lawrence Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 115077 |
| Local Authority | ESSEX |
| Inspection number | 298555 |
| Inspection dates | 5–6 July 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Ian Nelson |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 153 |
| Appropriate authority | The local authority |
| Headteacher | Mrs Ruth Slater |
| Date of previous school inspection | 22 June 2006 |
| School address | Rectory Road Rowhedge Colchester Essex CO5 7HR |
| Telephone number | 01206 728517 |
| Fax number | 01206 729563 |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. Nearly all the children are from White British backgrounds and all but two have English as their first language. The proportion of children eligible for a free school meal is below average. The proportion identified as needing extra help with their learning is above average. There have been a lot of staff changes in recent years. Children start the school with the skills and knowledge expected of their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005 HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school now provides a satisfactory quality of education and gives satisfactory value for money which is how staff judge its performance. Children make satisfactory progress through Foundation Stage to achieve the goals expected of their age. Satisfactory progress continues at Key Stages 1 and 2 so that standards at Year 2 have been maintained at average levels. Overall standards at Year 6 have improved from the low levels of 2006. When compared with 2006 national test results the standards achieved this year are average. Within this overall picture, however, there are differences between subjects at Year 6 with standards being above average in science, average in mathematics but below average in English because children lack the skills they need to write at a level expected of their age, although their reading is rather better than their writing. Children say that in the past they have mainly completed worksheets, which is the main reason why they have not acquired the writing skills they need to do better in their work now.

The improvements in the school's performance over the year are due to the dedicated, skilled and effective leadership of the headteacher. With the support of the deputy headteacher and chair of governors she has quickly gained an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what was needed to improve its performance. Most staff, have embraced the vision of the senior leaders and given them their wholehearted commitment and support in driving forward school improvements. The headteacher has rigorously tackled underperformance and not shirked from making difficult decisions. She has delegated responsibility to middle managers but some are new to their roles and lack experience so that overall leadership and management are satisfactory. Many parent questionnaires were negative and criticised leadership and management but the inspectors find that these criticisms are unfounded.

Increasingly effective management systems are bringing about improvements in key areas. Teaching is now satisfactory. Teachers plan work for different abilities based upon accurate checks of what children have learned previously. They no longer rely upon worksheets and give children a satisfactory range of practical learning activities which they enjoy greatly. Children's personal development, including their behaviour is now satisfactory. Many parents and children still have concerns over behaviour and how teachers manage it. In some lessons, particularly in Years 1, 2 and 6, teachers manage behaviour very well but in others they put up with children fiddling, fidgeting and rocking on chairs, instead of paying attention. This means that in too many lessons children make only satisfactory, rather than good progress in their learning. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school has improved systems for checking and recording how well children are doing so that teachers can set challenging targets for them to aspire to. However, teachers lack the skills needed to write useful individual education plans for children who need extra help with their learning. Overall improvement over the year has been satisfactory and the staff have shown they have a sound base on which to continue those improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons are based on high expectations of what children can achieve and how they should behave so that children's progress continues to improve.

- Ensure that staff have the skills and support to write focused individual education plans for children who need extra help.
- Ensure children know how to improve their writing and are equipped with the skills they need, and the opportunities to develop those skills across all subjects.
- Work even more closely with parents to help them to have a more accurate understanding of how well the school is doing and what staff are doing to tackle their concerns.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The previous inspection found that the school required significant improvement because achievement at Year 6 was inadequate. The school has now tackled underachievement though there is still more to do to raise standards in writing. Children made good gains over the year in their learning in mathematics and in science but reversing a legacy of underachievement in writing is proving a longer term task. The school is now tackling this with its involvement in the Big Writing project with some success. For example, some Year 6 children were proud to read their high quality personification poems to the inspectors. The 2006 national tests showed that girls achieved much better than boys but the 2007 results show that there is now little difference between them. This is because of better use of assessment information to set challenging targets and the more interesting work teachers give children. Those who need extra help with their learning receive adequate support, despite the poor quality individual education plans, and achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is satisfactory, which is an improvement since the last inspection. They say that they enjoy their lessons because they 'have great teachers' who 'try to make learning fun'. As a result, school 'is enjoyable and you learn.' Attendance is average. While children know about healthy food and a balanced diet those in Key Stage 2 still consume considerably more crisps and chocolate than fruit at break times. They understand the rules for behaviour and keeping safe, like the rota systems for the climbing equipment but they do not all make sensible decisions. Children are acquiring a satisfactory set of skills to enable them to be effective contributors to their community but some struggle to pay attention to the views of others, including their teachers at times. Their improving mathematical skills help to equip them for the next stage of schooling and adult life but they lack the literacy skills they need. They show an appropriate understanding and appreciation of a range of cultures and religions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are now satisfactory because rigorous monitoring by the headteacher and good guidance have helped teachers to improve their practice. Improved assessment and teachers' knowledge of their children's expected progress ensure satisfactory learning overall.

Lesson planning is now good. The best plans identify what each ability group in the class is expected to learn and these lessons include high expectations of behaviour. Currently, in some classes too much low level restlessness is tolerated which means children are not always attentive and the pace of lessons slows so that children do not always complete their tasks. Children's work is always marked but not all marking is high enough quality to give children a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory with good use made of the well resourced outside area.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum now provides more practical activities particularly in science and mathematics which has enhanced children's enjoyment in learning. Through the science and personal, social and health education activities, children have suitable opportunities to learn how to eat a healthy diet, and to keep themselves fit and safe. Religious education lessons, visits and visitors help children to develop a satisfactory understanding of our culturally diverse society. Better opportunities are provided for writing at length although the school knows there is more to do to develop links between subjects to make learning, and reasons for writing, more interesting and relevant. There is a sound range of clubs including sports which has a satisfactory take up rate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. All the required procedures for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of children are in place. More parents feel that the school takes account of their views than was the case in January when the school did its own survey. However, parents and children still have concerns about behaviour and how it is managed in the school, although children are confident that, should they have any concerns, an adult will deal with them. Good systems are in place now to track children's progress in English, mathematics and science and are used well to make sure children have their own targets for improvement. Children who need extra help with learning have satisfactory support to help them make sound progress. However, in the individual education plans for those with a high level of need, teachers are not identifying and planning for small, measurable steps.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has been through a difficult period and the senior leaders have handled serious issues very well. One parent commented 'the school's care, concern, commitment and time have been exceptional and professional at this difficult time'. While many parents expressed concerns about some aspects of the school others praised the school's improvements. One said 'my son believes that behaviour has definitely improved since the start of the year' and another said simply 'everything has improved'. This improvement is due to the skilful way the chair of governors, headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked tirelessly to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses, set clear targets for improvement and tackle tough issues sensitively but rigorously. There are extensive systems for checking the quality of all aspects of the school and holding staff to account for their performance. Some middle managers and governors are new to their roles and need to

build up their knowledge and experience to become fully effective in gaining a clear and accurate view of the school's performance. Staff changes also mean that there will be more new staff to induct in the new school year.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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| 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 | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| 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 | 3 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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

9 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Lawrence CE Primary School, Rowhedge, Essex, CO5 7HR

Thank you for welcoming Mrs Thompson and me to your school when we visited in July. This is the letter I promised to send you telling you what we thought about your school. We think your school has improved since it was last inspected. You are making better progress in Key Stage 2, except for your writing which you need to work on still, although we did like the poems some of the older pupils read to us. Your behaviour is better, although too many of you fidget and don't pay enough attention in some lessons. You say that you enjoy the 'practical and hands on' activities that teachers give you more than the worksheets you used to have. Your headteacher has done a splendid job of helping your school to get better over the last year.

We have asked her and the staff and governors to help the school to continue to improve by:

- making sure that all teachers expect you to work hard and behave well in lessons
- making sure all staff have the skills they need to plan work for those who need extra help in their learning
- helping you to improve your writing and have the chance to practice it
- working even more closely with your parents to help them to understand how well the school is doing and how it is tackling their concerns.

You can do your bit to help by working hard and behaving well so that you learn more and do even better in your tests.

Ian Nelson Lead Inspector