

St Lawrence Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118704
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313053
Inspection date	18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Jacque Buttriss

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Hudson
Headteacher	Alison Saunders
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2001
School address	Church Road Stone Street Nr. Sevenoaks TN15 0LN
Telephone number	01732 761393
Fax number	08454 680638

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small rural primary school in delightful surroundings. A comparatively high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are taught in small mixed-age classes. The teacher in the Reception class joined the Foundation Stage at the start of the academic year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. Pupils reach well-above-average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and more-able learners are appropriately challenged so that, as one parent put it, 'I feel very confident that my son is being helped to fulfil his potential.' Achievement is good overall, although progress is not even across the school. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is improving and pupils are now making good progress. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress overall, although the standard of pupils' writing at the end of Year 2 is below the national average. This is because the targets that they have been set in writing are not high enough, leading to some underachievement. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make outstanding progress from their starting points because teaching is especially strong.

Pupils benefit from high quality provision that leads to outstanding personal development and well-being. They demonstrate a good awareness of how to be healthy and an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. Pupils are polite and friendly and have very positive attitudes towards their work, as reflected in a parent's comment that 'the enthusiasm for learning is evident throughout the school'. The strong family ethos of this small school enables pupils to develop impressive confidence and social skills and to become caring, enthusiastic and articulate learners. They contribute keenly to their community and are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Pupils' attendance has improved and is now broadly average, although not all parents are conscientious enough about avoiding unnecessary absences.

Pupils of all ages and abilities benefit from the good teaching and describe their lessons as 'really fun'. There is an outstanding variety of opportunities for learning enrichment to support the curriculum, including many clubs and visits. The school provides excellent care, guidance and support for all its pupils. Parents praise the 'happy and nurturing atmosphere ... responding to the needs of individual pupils ... ensuring that all are included'.

Good leadership and management of the school is characterised by strong teamwork that demonstrates clear direction and enthusiasm for school improvement. Leaders know their school well. They regularly review all aspects of the school, correctly identifying areas for development and planning successful strategies to improve provision and raise standards. For example, they recognise the need to raise standards in Years 1 and 2, especially in writing. Governors give good support.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection and parents comment that 'the school has gone from strength to strength'. Indeed, parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and all that it does. As one parent put it, 'I cannot fault the school in any way. I feel very privileged that my son is able to attend such a fantastic school.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Recent changes in Foundation Stage leadership have improved the quality of provision for children in the Reception Year and it is now good. The school's data show that in the past, children have made satisfactory progress from their starting points, reaching broadly average standards by the end of the year. Good teaching means that children are now making good progress. They benefit from an exciting range of stimulating work that meets differing needs well. However, the development of early writing skills, such as handwriting, is not sufficiently

structured. As is the case throughout the school, teachers and teaching assistants give outstanding care and support to the Reception Year children. This helps children to develop confidence and independence at an early stage in their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress in writing in Years 1 and 2 by setting more challenging targets for teachers and pupils to aim at.
- Ensure that the school fully informs parents of the need to raise attendance levels by avoiding term-time holidays.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection. Children enter the school with standards in line with expectations for their age group. This is still the case when they are ready to join Year 1. At the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average overall, although pupils' attainment in writing is below the national average. Pupils do less well in writing because targets for them to reach are not challenging enough, meaning that teachers' expectations are not always sufficiently high.

Pupils' progress is good overall but it is not even across the school. Children are now making good progress in the Reception Year. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. From Years 3 to 6, particularly good teaching means that pupils make excellent progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and reach standards which are much higher than might be expected given their starting points. More-able pupils are given challenging work throughout the school and also make good progress. The school sets challenging targets for pupils in Years 3 to 6 and most of these pupils exceed their targets, many of them to a high degree. Targets set for pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not sufficiently challenging, especially in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils of all ages have a good understanding of what they need to do to keep healthy, commenting that their parents now provide a healthier diet at home. Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe. They demonstrate highly positive attitudes, such as 'I like learning and doing work.' This enthusiasm is reflected in their great enjoyment of school and all the opportunities it provides. Attendance levels have improved since the previous inspection and are now just within the average range, although too many parents continue to take their children away from school for term-time holidays. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils say that there is no bullying and they are confident that they would know what to do if it did occur. The active school council enables pupils to take part in school improvement, such as being 'field friends' who enhance their environment. Older pupils show maturity in undertaking a wide range of responsibilities to support the school community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Close involvement with the church next door ensures a high level of spiritual awareness in pupils. Multi-cultural initiatives such as a link with an Inuit school in Greenland that led to an 'Arctic Week' are much enjoyed by all pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching throughout the school is well planned to meet the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities within each class. An outstanding literacy lesson in upper Key Stage 2 enabled pupils to produce interesting written work of a very high standard. The good teaching is well paced with clear expectations, and teachers have good subject knowledge. Stimulating learning activities fully engage pupils. They work well together and all learners are also encouraged to develop good independent learning skills from the Reception Year onwards. Pupils' positive attitudes and exemplary behaviour in lessons help them to make good progress overall. However, learning targets in Key Stage 1 are not sufficiently challenging, especially in writing. As a result, pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not do as well as they should in writing. Teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils of all abilities. Homework is regularly set and parents report that their children 'enjoy the homework challenges'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to enjoy interesting and creative work. 'The subjects are really fun, including even maths,' said one Year 5 pupil. Provision for literacy and numeracy is very well targeted in Key Stage 2 to meet pupils' learning needs and this is particularly evident for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This, together with the strong emphasis on developing good social skills, prepares all pupils well for the next stage in their education.

The school provides an outstanding variety of activities outside the classroom, including many stimulating visits and clubs. One pupil's claim that 'We get to do more than big schools' is well founded. Themed weeks, in which pupils enjoy working with older or younger ones, provide exciting activities linking different subjects, from which children say they learn a lot. The impressive variety of awards gained by the school demonstrates the very high standards of many aspects of this school's curricular provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care and support given to all pupils is a distinctive feature of this school and ensures their optimum well-being. Inspectors agree with a typical comment echoed by many parents: 'Pastoral care and the supportive environment are excellent.' Arrangements for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all pupils are outstanding, with appropriate training and guidance for all members of staff and helpful links with outside agencies. Pupils recognise that the school listens to and responds to their views. There are very good systems to assess, monitor and track pupils' academic achievements, although teachers' marking is not consistent across all classes. All pupils are helped to understand well what they have to do to improve their work and they follow this guidance carefully across the curriculum. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have detailed individual education plans that ensure that they make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong leadership team leads with clear direction and is successfully focused on school improvement. As a result of their hard work, pupils' standards have risen considerably since the last inspection and all the issues have been successfully addressed, demonstrating the school's good capacity for further improvement. Leaders have created a strong staff team and a common sense of purpose through the school, in which inclusion is central. This is demonstrated by the impressive way that pupils who have not been able to settle happily in other schools have been successfully integrated here.

Self-evaluation processes are rigorous and the outcomes are accurate, correctly identifying areas for improvement, such as standards of writing in Key Stage 1 and ways to implement this. Leaders have developed imaginative strategies to ensure that resources, particularly staff, are used outstandingly well to provide maximum opportunities for individual teaching, in small classes wherever possible. Good links with parents, community, other schools and outside agencies ensure good transition and community involvement. Leaders set very challenging targets to help Key Stage 2 pupils successfully raise their standards. However, the school recognises that Key Stage 1 targets are not sufficiently challenging, especially in writing, and teachers are following an action plan to address this issue. Leaders have worked hard and developed a range of strategies to improve attendance, although this is still not as high as they would like. Subject leaders now take a more active part than in the past in monitoring standards and provision and this role is developing. As a result, leaders are now able to identify strengths and areas for development in each subject. The enthusiastic new Foundation Stage leader is quickly improving provision for children in the Reception year. Governors provide good support and challenge for the school and carry out their roles and responsibilities well.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	1
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

Dear Children,

Inspection of St Lawrence Church of England Primary School, Stone Street, Nr Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0LN

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we came to inspect your school. You made us feel very welcome and we enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a good school that helps you to do well in your work and cares for you exceptionally well.

These are the things we especially like about your school:

- You are friendly, polite and helpful and your behaviour is excellent – well done.
- The headteacher, teachers and staff all work hard to give you a good education.
- Your personal development and well-being are outstanding. You know how to be healthy and stay safe.
- You have very positive attitudes to your learning and you tell us you enjoy everything about school.
- Your teachers plan exciting work for you and there is an impressive variety of clubs and activities.
- The headteacher and staff all work hard to make sure that you are extremely well looked after. You are also very good at helping and caring for each other.
- The teachers are very well organised so that you can be taught in small classes. This helps you to learn quickly.

These are the things we think your school could do even better:

- Your teachers could set you more challenging targets so that you do better in writing in Years 1 and 2.
- The school could tell your parents that it is very important that you are not absent from school except when it is absolutely necessary, to make sure you do not miss lessons. You could help with this too.

We would like to wish you lots of success in your future education.

With very best wishes,

Mrs Jacquie Buttriss Lead inspector

19 September 2007

Dear Children,

**Inspection of St Lawrence Church of England Primary School, Stone Street,
Nr Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0LN**

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Lead inspector