

St Leonard's CofE (C) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124248
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314859
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Howard Stemp
Headteacher	Julie Lane
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	School Lane Dunston Stafford ST18 9AG
Telephone number	01785 712488
Fax number	01785 711341

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement in the Foundation Stage and by the end of Year 4, the school's self-evaluation systems and the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT). Evidence was gathered from published assessment data, the school's own records, parents' questionnaires, lesson observations and interviews with staff, governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Nearly all the pupils in this very small first school are from White British families. Hardly any speak English as an additional language. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all complete the full five years at the school. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The headteacher took up post in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Leonard's First is a good school. It is improving rapidly and has a number of outstanding features that are due to the excellent leadership of the headteacher. About a quarter of the parents who completed the inspection questionnaire paid specific tribute to the headteacher's leadership skills. In the few months she has been in school she has created a strong team of staff and governors who are united in their high expectations and determination to work for further advance. There is good capacity to do this.

Standards are above average at the end of Year 4 and pupils progress well through the school. Reception children make good progress from their average starting points. This is because they are taught as a separate year group, even though their numbers are small, and work is increasingly well matched to their needs. By the time they leave Reception, most have reached the targets for their age. Good progress follows through Years 1 and 2 and standards are above average. Across the school, standards have been improved well in writing and in speaking and listening. A higher than usual proportion of pupils reach the higher levels in their tests and assessments. Provision in ICT is satisfactory. Much of the ICT equipment is outdated and so it is difficult to provide learning activities that are as exciting as in most other subjects in school. Pupils' progress in ICT is held back by the lack of first class equipment. School leaders and the governors plan to remedy the shortage soon.

Parents believe firmly that the school does an effective job to develop the pupils as good people. They cite the family, friendly ethos as a particular strength. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully. Behaviour is good and any misbehaviour is dealt with firmly and fairly. Attendance is above average, which reflects pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school. Pupils are wise to the need to follow healthy lifestyles and their awareness of safety routines is excellent. The school is at the heart of the community, which ensures pupils can contribute successfully to village life, including church events and the annual Summer Fair. They also have a good understanding of other communities and faiths due to the emphasis in the curriculum on different traditions. The pupils have good literacy and numeracy skills for use in and beyond the next stage of their education. The school's links with other schools, agencies and community groups are particularly strong and result in a richness of experiences for the pupils. They also contribute to their preparation for life outside school.

The pupils are taught well. Lessons are enjoyed by the pupils. They say that the best things about school are 'all the different subjects and things we learn' and 'the way the teachers make learning fun and practical.' Work is generally well matched to the different ages and abilities in each of the three classes. Apart from ICT, the school is well resourced. Specialist teaching of French, music and physical education is good. Reception children respond enthusiastically to their French lessons and soon learn to follow basic instructions given in French. The good curriculum is interpreted in motivating ways, which spurs pupils' progress. The programme of out of school activities is excellent and includes a highly successful annual residential visit for the oldest pupils.

Care, guidance and support are all good. Academic guidance is effective in helping pupils to do well in their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, especially by the teaching assistants. Other pupils welcome these pupils into their midst and help them to work well. The marking of pupils' work is thorough. The headteacher has ensured

that the quality of marking has developed well and that it clearly identifies how well the pupils are achieving. She is now checking that it is equally informative about how pupils can improve further. Pupils are safeguarded effectively. There are appropriate checks on staff and others working with the pupils, risk assessment is rigorous, and fire and accident precautions are thorough.

Challenging targets are set for pupils' achievement. The system of tracking progress towards targets has been overhauled and is increasingly rigorous. The new system is still in the course of development but is already pinpointing good progress or lapses in achievement more quickly than before. This ensures that teaching support can be modified in good time to make certain that learning is always effective. The system of school self-evaluation has been improved by the development of more frequent and focused checks on the quality of provision. The headteacher, in particular, has a very thorough and accurate knowledge of the school's effectiveness. Such checks underpin the good management and administration of the school. Leadership is similarly good. Governors are challenging in a supportive way in order to ensure pupils get a good deal.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception children are keen to start work each day because they know it will be inviting, fun and different. This school year there are just eight children in Reception and ensuring that activities are matched precisely to the needs of each one is a current focus. Whilst the children started the year with the expected levels of skills and knowledge, the class includes more able children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching and learning are effective and so the children are all making good progress.

The curriculum is good and includes successful provision for French and speaking and, especially, listening. Outdoor facilities are satisfactory for the demands of the Foundation Stage curriculum and enable the children to work independently or with an adult to develop their physical and creative skills. There are plans to coordinate and improve the outdoor facilities to ensure provision is as effective as it is inside the classroom. Staff manage the daily transition in the use of the Reception classroom from learning centre to dining room smoothly. The strengths in Reception are due to the good leadership of the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that provision in ICT leads to exciting and effective learning, as in the other subjects in school.

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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?	1
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	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.

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	2
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

8 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dunston CE First School, Stafford ST18 9AG

It was good to see you all at work and play when I visited the school recently. I enjoyed finding out about your work and all the fun things in school. You told me you enjoy school and I can understand why. I think you go to a good school and that it is getting better all the time.

In my report, which I hope some of you will read, I have written about the good things I found. Here are the most important ones.

- You work well, make good progress and reach above average standards.
- Children in Reception do well.
- You learn to become good people and are friendly, helpful and polite.
- You behave well.
- Your lessons are enjoyable and interesting.
- You are taught well and staff take good care of you.
- Mrs Lane leads the school well and other staff and the governors join her in making sure you have a good education.
- You are well prepared for your next school.

There are a number of things the staff are working successfully to improve. There is one that is most important.

- Make sure that your work in ICT is as effective as in the other subjects in school.

I know you are keen on ICT and that you will help your teachers make good use of the new equipment as it is introduced.

Good luck with your work.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington Lead inspector



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