

St Lawrence CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124303
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314883
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Frances Gillam

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	198
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	25
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bettina Henderson
Headteacher	Samantha Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lowfield Lane Gnosall Stafford ST20 0ET

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Almost all pupils who attend this average sized primary school come from a White British background. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils who need extra help with learning and who have specific physical needs is rising and is now broadly in line with the national average. A private provider offers onsite childcare in clubs before and after school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught together in the Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Lawrence Church of England Primary provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. Parents are pleased with the changes they have seen since the appointment of the headteacher. Many comment positively on her drive and determination to improve the school. Procedures for evaluating the school's work are now satisfactory and better than they were. Overall, they identify the right priorities for improvement and enable senior leaders and governors to form an accurate picture of the school's success. These features show that leadership and management are satisfactory and that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Senior managers monitor and evaluate the strategies intended to raise standards, but not always carefully or frequently enough. Sometimes teachers have difficulties in implementing these strategies successfully and pupils' learning in some classes is uneven. Consequently, pupils' achievements are satisfactory rather than good. Predominantly satisfactory teaching enables pupils to make sound progress from their starting points and to reach above average standards by Year 6. The school is preparing pupils satisfactorily for the future.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, and the care, guidance and support they receive, are satisfactory. Pupils appreciate the way staff value their efforts and care for them. They say this makes them want to come to school and to work hard. Characteristics such as these support pupils' learning successfully. The strong focus on raising standards is leading to improvements, notably in writing. Senior leaders acknowledge the school has not yet had the same level of success in improving pupils' achievements in mathematics. This is because, in some classes, the more able pupils have the potential to do better and at times the less able struggle to master the tasks provided for them. These problems arise in some year groups because teachers do not check carefully enough if these pupils are ready to move on with their learning. This sometimes slows the pace of learning for the more able and results in the less able too often revisiting work in order to secure their understanding.

Satisfactory provision in the Reception class enables children to make a sound start to school. It is no better than this because the systems for checking children's achievements in the Reception Year do not give staff a clear enough picture of children's attainment when they first start school. This means that some activities do not build well enough on children's previous experiences and, in particular, their good personal skills. This is also a feature in some other classes throughout the school, where pupils do not always have enough opportunities to work together to solve problems and to discuss and reflect on their learning.

Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. The school environment is calm and well ordered because pupils behave well. They act safely and show high levels of care for each other. Pupils participate eagerly in sporting activities and these contribute successfully to their health and well-being. Pupils' attendance is good and they like their school. Some pupils say their learning could be more interesting, although they appreciate the efforts made over the past year to make the satisfactory curriculum more appealing, particularly in science. The extensive range of exciting activities outside normal lessons contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of school. Links with parents and outside agencies are strong and they help successfully to support pupils' well-being. Pupils make a positive contribution to their school and local community and they are beginning to build positive relationships with the wider community and people from different backgrounds.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

In the main, adults in the Reception class devote their attention to meeting children's personal and learning needs satisfactorily. This enables the children to achieve as well as expected for their age. Some good links with pre-school providers, and close liaison with local medical services, ease children's transfer into school successfully. Children settle quickly and they soon learn the classroom routines. The children are happy and they foster strong and trusting relationships with adults and each other. This shows in the way they play equally well with others or on their own. At times, however, children spend too much time sitting listening to adults rather than developing their ideas through talk and play. Adults do not always have a clear idea of how to plan the next steps in learning when children first start school because of weaknesses in the procedures for gauging children's attainment on entry. Consequently, some children make uneven progress, especially in developing the personal skills to enable them to become independent learners. Policies, records and procedures comply with statutory requirements. Monitoring of the Reception class identifies areas of weakness and the action required to deal with them, including some of the weaker areas referred to above. The leader of the EYFS has the necessary capacity to support colleagues and to tackle these weaknesses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to work with others, so they have greater responsibility in organising their work and have better chances to discuss and reflect on their learning.
- Improve the systems for assessing children's attainment on entry to the Reception Year, to identify and support their needs more effectively.
- Ensure that teachers respond more effectively to meeting the needs of the more and less able pupils in mathematics.
- Check more carefully and regularly the success of improvement strategies, so that misconceptions in teachers' understanding are identified quickly and dealt with promptly.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children's attainment on entry to school is above the expectations for their age. They make satisfactory progress and by the time they enter Year 1, children's attainment is above average. Work to strengthen children's understanding of letter sounds is paying dividends. It is helping to improve their achievements in the early skills of reading and writing. Standards are above average by Year 2 and by Year 6. Pupils in Years 1 to 6, including those who need extra support with their learning, make satisfactory progress. Senior leaders set every class challenging targets. These targets are helping to raise standards, notably in reading and writing. Pupils' skills in these areas are developing faster than they have been, but mathematics remains relatively weaker throughout the school. In mathematics, teachers do not always make sure that the work for the more able pupils is suitably demanding and that lower attaining pupils have consolidated their understanding before they move on to the next stage of learning. Pupils' scientific skills of investigation have improved over the past

year. These now enable pupils to develop their scientific knowledge and understanding more successfully and their rate of progress has increased as a result.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils feel they have an important part to play in their school and local community. They willingly give their time to supporting village events, to raising charitable funds and to determining how to make their school a better place to be. Pupils' understanding and respect for cultures and beliefs different from their own are satisfactory, as are their contribution and relationships with the wider community. Pupils' strong sense of right and wrong and the high level of care they show for others underpin their good behaviour and positive relationships. Pupils have a strong sense of empathy with others and show compassion for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils act safely and sensibly in and around the school.

Pupils choose to take part in physical activity because they understand the benefits this has for their health. Even though pupils are developing a secure understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet, not all of them use this understanding well enough to help them make sensible choices about what they eat. Pupils attend school regularly and many say they like school. Pupils say lessons are now more exciting than they were, but generally, they find mathematics not as much fun to learn as other subjects. In some classes, adults hamper pupils' personal skills because they do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to discuss and consider their learning and to work with others to develop their ideas. Consequently, pupils' personal skills are developing satisfactorily and this provides a sound platform for their future learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good relationships between pupils, teachers and teaching assistants promote positive behaviour and help lessons to run smoothly. Pupils know what teachers expect them to learn and this gets lessons off to quick start. Teachers strive to meet the full range of pupils' needs, but some fall short of this. This is because these teachers do not use information about pupils' achievements well enough to plan the next steps in learning. This means that in some classes the more able pupils complete work that is too easy for them. For example, in some guided reading sessions, pupils' independent work was undemanding and did not promote good reading skills. Problems with meeting pupils' needs are also apparent in some mathematics lessons. Here, pupils that are more able say their work is too easy and, even with the support of teaching assistants, less able pupils find some activities too difficult to understand. This hinders the rate of learning these pupils make.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Senior leaders monitor pupils' responses to the curriculum and, as a result, they have introduced a topic-based approach to learning. The topics are proving popular with the pupils. Many say that learning in subjects such as science and history is now much more exciting. The school recognises it has still some way to go for this work to embed fully, especially in terms of raising pupils' enjoyment and achievements in mathematics. The wide range of interesting activities outside normal lessons, including sporting clubs and opportunities for pupils to use the Sanctuary

for quiet thought and reflection, enrich aspects of pupils' learning and personal development successfully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils say they feel safe and that teachers will deal with any problems promptly and fairly. Senior leaders manage safeguarding procedures satisfactorily and staff routinely remind pupils of how to stay safe and keep healthy. The success of support programmes for pupils who struggle with their learning is inconsistent because some teachers do not always match activities well enough to these pupils' individual needs. In some classes, teachers' marking is helpful and explains to pupils how they can improve and do better in their work, but this too varies in quality across the school. Strong links with parents, local playgroups and medical and welfare agencies help to support successfully children's transfer to school and to cater for the needs of vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Parental confidence in the headteacher is high. Many parents commented on the increase in their children's enjoyment of school and their heightened interest in learning since her appointment. The governors and senior leadership team place a strong emphasis on giving all pupils equal chances to do well and succeed in their learning, but there is still some way to go to achieve this. Senior leaders hold staff to account for the progress pupils make in each class and have various means of measuring the staff's success. However, senior leaders sometimes leave too long a period between the time improvement strategies are implemented and when they are checked for their effectiveness. This allows problems in the quality of teaching to arise and to persist, and leads to uneven progress in some classes and subjects.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Children

Inspection of St Lawrence Church of England Primary School, Gnosall, ST20 0ET

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed seeing all the interesting things you were doing and hearing your views about your school.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. Your teachers and the people in charge of your school do a satisfactory job. This enables you to achieve satisfactorily and to reach above average standards by Year 6.

Here are some good things we found about your school.

- You get on well together and show respect and care for others. Your behaviour is good and this helps to make your school a pleasant place to be.
- You act safely and sensibly because you know how important it is to look out for yourself and others.
- You like school and you arrive on time and attend regularly.
- You take part in a wide range of exciting activities outside normal lessons. These help to keep you fit and make your learning more interesting and fun.
- Your school works successfully with others to support your health and well-being and you make a positive contribution to your school and local community.

We have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on four things to help you speed up your learning.

- Make sure that teachers give you more chances to share your ideas and talk about your learning in lessons.
- Help children in the Reception class make a better start to school.
- Help all of you do even better in mathematics.
- Make sure that the plans for helping you to improve your learning are working properly.

You can all help by working extra hard.

Yours sincerely

Fran Gillam Lead inspector