

St Lawrence's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108509
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	324786
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

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 aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	214
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Cunningham
Headteacher	Miss Bernadette Lamb
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Headlam Street Byker Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE6 2JX
Telephone number	0191 2659881
Fax number	0191 2659806

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2008
Inspection number	324786

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school is situated in an urban area. It serves a community with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is currently high and has increased considerably since the previous inspection. There are almost twice as many pupils with English as an additional language than there were three years ago. Many of them are in the early stages of learning English. This figure is above the national average. Home languages spoken include Czech, Russian and Tagalog. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved the School Sports Strategy Activemark and Partnership Gold award. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises a Nursery class and a Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Lawrence's is a good school. Based on the starting points into the EYFS, which are below those typically expected, all pupils make good progress by the time they leave school in Year 6. Parents are overwhelmingly positive in expressing their gratitude and trust in the school. Comments such as, 'The headteacher and staff are very approachable and communication between school and home is very helpful', are typical. Achievement is good and much improved since the previous inspection. Standards are average in Year 2 and Year 6. The recent priority given to improving pupils' writing is evident in the above average standards reached in the provisional results of the most recent Year 6 national tests. All pupils make equally good progress. Those learning English as an additional language quickly catch up and achieve as well as their peers. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress and achieve well as a result of the effective support provided by skilful teaching assistants.

The headteacher is well supported by a talented and hardworking staff. Governors are well informed and use their professional expertise to good effect to support the headteacher. Teamwork is strong. The school exudes a strong commitment to making sure all pupils achieve their best and there is a good level of equality fostered at all levels. Pupils are encouraged to value diversity and place a high level of trust in their teachers. This results in the successful breakdown of barriers to learning and a shared vision for the school as a central part of the local community. Personal development and well-being are good with outstanding features in the attitude and behaviour of pupils. To say pupils enjoy school is an understatement; they thrive and flourish, buoyed by the 'safe haven' created by all who work in school. All pupils matter and parents are encouraged to get involved in family learning classes and in helping to support their children's learning at home. Attendance remains stubbornly below average despite the school's best efforts.

Teaching is good. Common features include probing questioning and encouraging pupils to participate. Lessons are well planned and expectations of pupils are generally appropriate. Assessment procedures are developing. The marking of pupils' work is consistently thorough, but opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning and know their targets for improvement are less well developed. The good curriculum is effectively enhanced by recent actions to raise standards in all pupils' work, not just literacy and numeracy. As a result, there is much high quality written and information and communications technology (ICT) work across the school. Links with specialist sports coaches in the local community and visits to various creative centres in the city are all combining to enrich pupils' learning effectively. The school gives good value for money. Improvements since the last inspection have been good and the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the EYFS is satisfactory. Children start in the Nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age with many children demonstrating particularly low communication, personal and social skills. Achievement is satisfactory. By the time they start in Year 1, children are achieving below expected levels overall in all areas of learning. Caring support and good relationships means that children new to the school and the country settle quickly and gain confidence. Attention to learning basic skills, for example, learning the names and sounds of letters, and how to read simple words, is a high priority. This contributes well to improving

children's listening skills. Good attention to the transition between home and the Nursery and into the Reception class means that children become more confident and happy. Closer working practices are developing satisfactorily between the two classes, for example, with recent improvements in planning and a simple system to record children's experience of different areas. Teaching is satisfactory overall.

Leadership is satisfactory and provides a good role model for teaching, although there are some routines that require reviewing, such as a lack of opportunity for children in both classes to extend their learning outside. This can be partly attributable to the inadequate outdoor provision and difficult access. Comprehensive assessments track individual children's progress towards the early learning goals, although there are some variations between the two classes. Arrangements to ensure that the welfare of children is a high priority are developing in accordance with the revised EYFS statutory requirements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to be involved in assessing their own learning and understanding of their targets.
- Improve the provision for outdoor learning in the EYFS so that children have the opportunity to experience learning in all areas of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start school into the Nursery with a level of skills that are below those typically seen in all areas of learning. They are particularly low in communication, language and literacy. By the time they leave school in Year 6, pupils' standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science, although standards in writing are above average. More able pupils reach the higher levels appropriately. The most recent national test results confirm the findings of the inspection. Achievement is good. All pupils, especially those with English as an additional language and learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. Progress has improved too by the end of Key Stage 1 and standards are broadly average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils really enjoy coming to school and talk enthusiastically about their work. The comments of older pupils who say, 'Everyone smiles, laughs and says hello' and, 'It is boring in the summer when we can't come to school,' show just how happy pupils are. Behaviour in and around school is excellent. Pupils are considerate, polite and display respect for each other. This admirably reflects the school's positive ethos and values. Attendance is broadly average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They understand right from wrong and older pupils have a key role operating the 'buddy bench stop'. Pupils are confident and say they feel safe and secure in school and know that staff will help if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils are aware of the benefits of adopting a healthy lifestyle and this is evident in the recent sporting awards. The school council provides a good opportunity for pupils to practise their democratic roles and prepares them well for the future. The school meets the needs of the wide range of pupils particularly well so they all feel valued and included. At times, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good. In good lessons, pupils are well motivated and eager to learn. Expectations are high, questioning is probing and explanations are clear and help pupils to understand what to do. Relationships and behaviour are excellent. Work is well matched to the differing needs of pupils in each class, including those learning English for the first time. The support provided by teaching assistants and the teaching of Spanish are key strengths. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and generally fully included in lessons. Occasionally, pupils' learning is hampered because of the limitations of the activities provided, for example, the use of simple worksheets. Pupils' work is well marked and always presented neatly. Points for improvement are given. Planning is detailed. Improving assessment is currently a school priority. It is developing satisfactorily, although there are too few opportunities for pupils' involvement in assessing their own learning and knowing the goals they are working towards, in all classes, apart from Year 6.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum has some major strengths. A recent development to apply basic skills across the curriculum is having a good impact on raising standards in writing and improving the overall quality of work in subjects such as history and geography. Active steps to bring learning to life, such as a farm visit and taking part in a 'lions of Zulu' theme day, are provided. Good use is made of ICT to enrich the quality of pupils' work. The use of topics and themes is highly effective in inspiring pupils to write with accuracy and imagination, for example, by imagining the feelings and thoughts of child evacuees during the London blitz. The curriculum is successfully enriched with a wide range of activities, such as participation in refugee week and weekly Spanish lessons for every class. Strong links with local sports initiatives provide good opportunity to develop talents and skills. Good use is made of the variety of creative outlets in the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care for its pupils. A strong caring ethos is evident in all aspects of its work. There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils feel safe. Staff are adequately equipped to deal with health and safety matters through regular, up-to-date training. Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements. Concerted efforts to improve attendance take place but a small number of families allow their children too much time away from school. Good transition arrangements are in place to ensure a smooth transfer into Year 1 and to the next stage of education. Pupils learning English for the first time are well supported and, as a result, they settle quickly and become part of the school family. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are promptly identified and well catered for. There is a close partnership with external agencies to provide additional support for some pupils. The school checks pupils' progress carefully and this provides staff with a good basis to set pupils' learning targets. Opportunities are missed to give pupils extra responsibility to develop their own assessment skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by two assistant headteachers and a talented and very committed team of staff. The good links with the local community give parents confidence and trust in the school that is admirably reflected in their comments, for example, '... simply the best school that provides good education and discipline' and, 'We have full confidence in the way our children are taught and cared for.' This promotes community cohesion well. The vision for the school has at its heart a palpable drive to improve and overcome the many barriers the pupils could have to their learning. Self-evaluation accurately reflects the school's priorities. Subject leaders have key responsibilities and have completed comprehensive monitoring of teaching and pupils' work. Governors are astute and play a key role in working with the headteacher to evaluate the school's work. The professional expertise of the governors is being well used to work towards the Financial Management Standards in Schools.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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

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?	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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
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 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

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Lawrence's RC Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE6 2JX

Thank you on behalf of Mr Petts and myself for making our time in your school so enjoyable. We learned so much about your school from our discussions with some of you and our observations of your work in lessons. We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour. Please pass on our thanks to your parents for returning their questionnaires. We agreed with all the good things they said about your school. We found your school to be good. Some of the things you do well are listed below.

You work hard and your work is well presented and interesting to read.

You are all well cared for; someone described your school as a 'safe haven' – we agree!

Your behaviour is excellent.

Teaching is good and because of this you all make good progress, especially those of you are learning to speak English for the first time.

Everyone working in school is very committed to making sure you achieve as well as you can.

We have asked the school to make things even better by:

giving you more responsibility for your learning by assessing your own work and knowing your targets;

improving the outdoor area for the younger children to enable learning to take place all the time instead of short periods each day.

Thank you again for making us so welcome. We loved your displays of the evacuation.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector