

St Laurence's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110845
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325239
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Deane-Hall

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	240
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	Mrs Shauna DeWolf
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Southgate
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Arbury Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB4 2JX
Telephone number	01223 712227
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school that serves the Catholic communities to the north of Cambridge. Around 90% of the children are Catholic. The majority of children are White British but, in recent years, the school has admitted an increasing number of children who speak English as an additional language. Families in the school community experience a wide range of social and economic circumstances but the number entitled to free school meals is slightly below average. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. When children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their skills and knowledge are often below those expected for children of their age.

The school holds the Investors in People award, the International Schools award, the National Healthy Schools award and the Activemark award.

There is childcare provision on site, which is not managed by the governing body. This provision will be the subject of a separate inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school provides a good quality of education. The vast majority of parents rightly believe this is a school where their children are well cared for and safe. One parent said, 'It is a very caring school where children are treated as individuals and their learning tailored appropriately.' Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for children of their age, particularly in their communication skills and social development. The school is successful in supporting an increasing number who have English as an additional language. Pupils make good overall progress as they move through the school, because teaching is good and many take full advantage of the wide range of learning opportunities provided. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly in line with the national average. The good progress is continued as pupils move up through the school. In 2008, standards in English were exceptionally high and well above average in both mathematics and science. This, however, was a particularly able group. Standards for the current Year 6 are close to the national average. Standards in writing, particularly for boys, are rising because the school has enriched opportunities for pupils to widen their use of language. Achievement is good overall. Pupils who have additional learning needs progress well because they are provided with work which is closely matched to their needs. Those who have English as an additional language also make good progress because they are well supported by their teachers and teaching assistants.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Many say they enjoy their lessons enormously and behaviour is often excellent. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and are exceptionally clear about how to keep themselves and others safe. Many are keen to take on responsibilities in the school and wider community. In lessons, they work well together to complete their tasks.

Teaching is consistently good. There is some outstanding teaching when lessons are closely based upon previous learning and where high expectations of what pupils can do are shared with the class. In these lessons pupils see the relevance of what they are learning and enjoy their work. The best teaching ensures that pupils get clear guidance on what they need to improve to reach their next target, but at times the teachers' comments are too general to be helpful. The school provides an excellent range of activities to help pupils to learn. These include good opportunities for physical education and in sport. Music, dance and drama all boost pupils' self-confidence and have a positive impact on their readiness and ability to learn. The school has thorough procedures to support pupils who find learning difficult. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils are extremely well cared for and supported so that they feel safe and secure in school. Staff check pupils' progress carefully and generally use this information well to help ensure that they are progressing as expected.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and governors undertake their roles well. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and hold senior staff to account for its effectiveness. Links with parents and the community are strong. The school provides many opportunities for outside organisations to work closely with the school and for parents and support agencies to enrich pupils' learning. The school has been successful in addressing the issues for improvement identified in the last inspection. This, along with accurate school self-evaluation and effective forward planning show that the school's capacity to make further improvements is good

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly into safe and secure routines because staff pay excellent attention to their welfare and individual needs. Most children, including those with learning difficulties and English as an additional language, make good progress in all areas of learning and quickly gain language, social and independent learning skills within a stimulating and exciting learning environment. By the time children start in Year 1 the majority are close to the levels expected for their age. Good leadership and management, together with strong teamwork, ensure that the needs of all children are met, particularly where children need additional support in their learning. Teaching in group activities is good and is well focused on achievement and on ensuring that all children are fully included and able to benefit equally. Language and counting skills are a major part of everyday learning and often involve children working together to solve problems. Resources are imaginative and used well to support the good range of learning activities. As far as possible, staff make good use of the outside learning space but, with insufficient cover, this is often limited by weather conditions.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that teaching enables all pupils to understand exactly what they need to do in order to improve their work and raise standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. This is due in part to the increasing use made of the information on how pupils are doing and consistently good teaching. When they enter Year 1, their skills, knowledge and understanding are close to those expected for their age. An increase in the number of pupils with English as an additional language means that for many, the development of literacy skills is problematical. The school works successfully to reduce barriers to learning, recognising that this is the way to improve standards. For example, providing pupils with good opportunities to develop their imagination through acting out ideas, is proving to be successful in motivating all, but particularly boys, to transfer this enthusiasm into their writing. In 2008 standards in Year 2 were broadly average. In Year 6 they were well above average overall. Standards this year are near the national average but, even so, pupils achieve well, a few exceeding the targets expected of them, and make good progress from when they started at the school in Reception. Pupils with additional learning needs and those with English as an additional language also achieve well because their needs are known and the good support which they receive helps them to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. The school provides an extremely happy and secure learning environment, where pupils develop excellent relationships with each other and with their teachers. 'Teachers are our friends,' said one. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils of all ages gain confidence and the capacity to take responsibility for enterprising activities, such as fund-raising for the school and outside charities. Pupils are very clear about how to keep themselves healthy and they demonstrate this through the choices they make for healthy food and the number who regularly participate

in sports. Behaviour is outstanding because pupils are interested and keen to learn. Pupils say they feel safe in school and they are confident in the knowledge that there is always someone to help them when problems arise. Most show great enjoyment in their education and work hard during lessons. Attendance is good because pupils want to come to school. They make a good contribution to the life of the school as well as participating regularly in a range of local community activities. Class representatives on the school council are proud of their responsibilities and are proactive in suggesting improvements to the school. Pupils make good progress in developing the necessary basic skills for secondary education and for the world of work beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good and is characterised by detailed planning, which takes into account the different abilities and needs of pupils in each class. Challenging activities involve pupils fully and as a result, they almost always enjoy their lessons, try hard and behave extremely well. Teachers increasingly use information and communication technology to good effect to make learning more interesting. Tasks are meaningful because teachers make it clear at the beginning of lessons what the focus of learning will be. Excellent relationships create a highly supportive atmosphere in lessons, which means pupils are willing to 'have a go' and are quick to ask for help if they do not understand. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to meet the wide range of needs amongst the pupils and to ensure that different groups achieve well. Teachers generally mark work conscientiously, praising pupils for what they have done well and giving them confidence. However, opportunities are not always fully grasped to tell them how to improve their work so that, although most know what their targets for improvement are, many are unclear about what they need to do to achieve their goal.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has an outstanding curriculum. An exceptionally broad range of enrichment activities has a strongly positive impact on pupils' confidence and on the development of a 'can do' approach. Literacy and numeracy are at the heart of the curriculum and pupils are provided with lots of opportunities to use these skills, to good effect, in other aspects of their learning. Activities are exceptionally well matched to the school's range of ability and to the diversity of cultural background represented in its community. Personal, health and social education provision enriches pupils' learning, so that they develop into well-rounded members of society. The teaching of French, German and Spanish, opportunities for pupils to play a musical instrument or to sing with the choir and chances to enjoy a range of sports, all form an important part of this exceptional provision. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from additional challenges with other schools, such as quizzes, sports and musical activities. The school modifies its curriculum effectively to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. An excellent range of extra-curricular clubs, visitors and trips to places of educational interest add enormously to the quality of pupils' enjoyment in learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Parents speak highly about the care and support they, and their children, receive. The school places a strong emphasis on nurturing and developing each individual pupil to help them reach their full potential. The staff work as a dedicated team who are committed to developing pupils' confidence and academic skills. This work has a strong impact on their personal development. The procedures for safeguarding and for ensuring the protection and welfare of pupils are rigorous. Pupils feel safe and happy in school because they have total trust in the adults and confidently turn to them when problems occur. Pupils with additional learning needs receive good support in classrooms from skilled teaching assistants as well as through individual education plans. The school has developed a robust and effective system for tracking and assessing pupils' progress. Teachers are beginning to set challenging targets to help pupils improve their work. The school works closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils who are vulnerable or need extra help receive the necessary support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the school has established an excellent caring ethos where pupils are valued as individuals. The extremely rigorous and accurate self-evaluation process has helped ensure that there is a shared vision for the future and an excellent team spirit. The headteacher, ably supported by the senior management team, has successfully improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection and introduced a rigorous system to check how well pupils are getting on. These two aspects of the school have helped enormously to improve learning and to ensure an exceptionally high degree of equality of opportunity for all. Leaders at all levels are accountable for their work and provide a very clear direction for future improvements. The school is active in its community and is systematically developing the role which pupils play within the local and wider communities. This considered approach to promoting community cohesion is reflected well in curriculum planning. Governance is good. Governors are committed to the school, play an active role and pool their skills to the common good. The governing body understands the strengths and areas for improvement but does not yet include its own action plan for the future, within the school's development plan.

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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 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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
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

12 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Laurence Catholic Primary School, Cambridge, CB4 2JX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. This letter is to tell you what we think about your school.

We think you go to a good school, where your teachers look after you exceptionally well. Your behaviour is excellent and you say that you get on well. Older children help around the school, you learn a lot in lessons and you all thoroughly enjoy the activities, clubs and visits. Because the teaching is good and you have plenty of interesting activities in class and after school, you are learning lots of new things. Mrs Southgate, the governors and the rest of the staff have good plans to make the school even better because they know exactly what works well and what needs to be improved.

In order to make your good school even better, we have asked Mrs Southgate and the teachers to:

- make sure that you know exactly how you can improve your work to meet your 'targets' so that you can reach even higher standards.

You can play your part in improving the school further by continuing to behave and work hard.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Deane-Hall

Lead inspector