

St Leonard's CofE (A) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124381
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328123
Inspection date	13 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	36
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	Chris Scargill
Headteacher	David Mellor
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ipstones Stoke-on-Trent ST10 2LY
Telephone number	01538 266292
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than most other primary schools. A very small number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The overwhelming majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and far fewer pupils than usual speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much lower than average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school has two mixed-age classes; a Reception/Year 1 and 2 class in which the Early Years Foundation Stage is taught and a Year 3 and 4 class.

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 and pupils are right to be proud of it. They confirm that they are happy and very well cared for. The overwhelming majority of parents have great confidence in the school and its headteacher. One parent spoke for many when saying, 'My child is happy at St Leonard's, thriving and making good progress.' The headteacher provides the school with clear direction. Good teaching leads to many examples of effective learning and pupils make good progress to reach standards that are above average by Year 4. When children start in the Reception class, their skills are broadly those expected of their age. They make good progress because there is a very strong focus on developing children's social skills and their ability to communicate with each other. Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 have been above average in most respects for the past three years and continue to rise. Standards in mathematics are average, however, because pupils are not always provided with sufficiently challenging work. Pupils achieve well not just because teaching and learning are good, but also because they are encouraged to see their potential and are given the self-confidence to work hard and aim high. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, give clear explanations and plan their lessons well to meet the wide range of ages in their classes. They use questioning in lessons skilfully to promote learning, to analyse and improve pupils' performance, and to set challenging targets for individuals. Learning is occasionally slowed when teachers do not plan well enough to meet the range of pupils' prior attainment in their classes. Consequently, in a few lessons, pupils are not challenged as much as they should be.

Pupils' personal development is good and they behave outstandingly well. Very good relationships and excellent care, guidance and support result in extremely happy learners. A carefully planned and varied curriculum inspires pupils to work hard and gain a very wide range of skills. Teachers mark books and set targets for improvement carefully and regularly, and give clear and well-directed advice to pupils as to how to improve their work. Consequently, pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning. Pupils come to school ready to learn and are eager to contribute to lessons. The above-average attendance rate reflects pupils' strong enjoyment of school. Pupils take part in a good range of sports, they adopt healthy lifestyles well and are well prepared for the next phase of their education and beyond. Although pupils from all backgrounds work and play together well, their awareness of different cultures in the diverse society in which we live is less well developed than it should be. This is because the school has not fully evaluated how well it meets its requirements to promote community cohesion.

Governors involve themselves well in the life of the school and are supportive as well as challenging when they need to be. The school has good capacity to improve further, as improvement since the previous inspection has been good and the school accurately assesses and evaluates its work.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children love coming to school and parents are very appreciative of the good start that their children receive in Reception. They particularly commend the way their children are helped to settle into the mixed-age Reception and Key Stage 1 class. One parent said, 'The family learning sessions were brilliant and I felt privileged to learn alongside my child in such a friendly school.' Staff have created a safe, attractive environment in which the needs of all children are well

met. Children make good progress because the teaching is good. A team of well-qualified adults support the children skilfully by asking focused questions to develop their understanding. There is a very good balance of activities led by adults and those from which children can choose. However, the school does not make enough use of the well-equipped outdoor area for learning and for developing children's physical skills. Children are developing excellent social skills because they are making choices and fostering independence through working with others. All adults make accurate, sharply focused observations of children to assess their learning but too few adults are involved in using these observations to plan the next steps in learning. By the end of the Reception Year, standards in most areas are above those expected for their age. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage provides good leadership to her team. She has a comprehensive understanding of the Early Years curriculum and constantly reviews her practice to ensure that all children receive high quality care, education and support. She has a clear understanding of the strengths of provision and has identified appropriate priorities for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on current planning to raise standards in mathematics by providing more challenging tasks and investigation work.
- Ensure that teachers in all classes plan work carefully in all lessons to match pupils' abilities and their specific needs.
- Provide greater opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding and awareness of people from other backgrounds.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the time they leave St Leonard's. Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly those expected for their age. They make good progress through the mixed-age Reception and Year 1 and 2 class so that standards at the end of Year 2 are significantly above average and have been for the past three years. Reading and writing skills have improved considerably and are above average, but mathematics has improved less quickly and remains average. The school's very careful tracking of pupils' work shows that, overall, this good progress continues into Years 3 and 4, where many pupils are making four National Curriculum sub-levels of progress each year. Pupils' work and classroom observations confirm this and standards at the end of Year 4 are above average. There is no difference in the progress made by the various groups of pupils in the school. This is because the school works effectively to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who enter the school with particularly low levels of attainment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils relate well to one another and are excited by all that the school has to offer. This is reflected in their exemplary behaviour, great enjoyment of learning, good attendance and keen involvement in a wide range of activities. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and their cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils respond well so that, by Year 4, they are mature, considerate, self-assured, and responsible young people. One parent summed up the delight of many when saying, 'My child left St Leonard's a confident, broadminded young man.' The school, through strong links with the local church and involvement

in community projects such as local history workshops, helps to develop pupils' understanding of their local community and the part they play in it. Their contribution to and involvement in the life of their wider community, however, is more limited and many pupils have little awareness of the multicultural society in which we live. The school council is effective and has made useful suggestions to bring about changes in the school, such as the provision of facilities in the playground. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They feel safe, can talk to adults if they have any concerns and are well prepared for the next stage of their education because of their good progress in basic skills allied to their positive attitudes to learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils respond well to the good teaching, and they make good progress in lessons. Skilful questioning is used by the most effective teachers to draw out ideas from pupils. In most lessons, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and their planning ensures that a good range of activities keeps pupils' interest. They are particularly effective at planning to meet the needs of the wide age range of pupils in the mixed-age Key Stage 1 and 2 classes. Teachers make clear exactly what they want pupils to learn and why it is important. This is reinforced effectively throughout lessons. Good partnerships in classrooms between teachers and teaching assistants lead to effective support for pupils who find learning hard. A key feature of the best lessons is a good pace of learning that challenges pupils of all abilities well. There is, however, variability in the way some teachers plan to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities in lessons. This results in a few pupils not being challenged well enough and therefore not making sufficient progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The carefully planned curriculum contributes well to pupils' learning. There is a strong focus on English, and much discussion is linked to helping pupils with their writing. Provision for information and communication technology across subjects is good and makes a big contribution to pupils' good achievement. A wide range of visitors and visits, including residential trips, as well as a good variety of after-school activities, enriches the curriculum and promotes and enhances pupils' personal and social development. The school provides pupils with a variety of sporting activities as part of the school day. These, together with well-supported creative and educational activities outside normal lessons, make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, their levels of enjoyment and their personal development. The school recognises that whilst there is some good practice developing whereby meaningful links are made between different subjects, it is reviewing the way this can be embedded in all classes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Arrangements for child protection are very secure and the school fully meets requirements relating to safeguarding. The school works exceptionally well with outside agencies to ensure all pupils are able to take a full part in the life of the school. The adults in school place the pupils at the centre of all their work. Parents are kept well informed of their children's learning

through termly meetings and the informal daily opportunities provided by the teachers. The school's very good systems for promoting behaviour ensure that pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Exceptionally careful tracking of pupils' progress enables the school to target support to help all pupils achieve well. Pupils have a clear understanding of their targets, and the marking of their work gives positive feedback and provides advice on how to improve further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. The headteacher works tenaciously to improve pupils' educational opportunities. He communicates his high expectations persuasively to staff so that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team. The headteacher checks the school's performance rigorously and has a good understanding of what the school does well and what are its imperatives for development. He is quick to recognise and praise the good work of staff and pupils. Because staff benefit from supportive feedback, a climate has been created where everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. Consequently, teamwork is strong, staff morale is high and pupils' progress accelerating. The governing body, as well as being completely supportive of the school, scrutinises all aspects of the school's work, such as pupils' performance and the curriculum. It asks challenging questions of school leaders. Leaders have created a school which is a harmonious environment, in which pupils of all races and cultures get on well together. However, because of the limited extent to which pupils are encouraged to become involved in the wider community and with others from different ethnic groups and cultures, community cohesion is not well enough developed and is no more than satisfactory.

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 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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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	2
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

14 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Leonard's C of E First School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST10 2LY

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. What a lovely day we had! We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. St Leonard's C of E First School is a good school and is getting even better. You told us many interesting things about your school and you are right to be proud of it. Here are some of the really good things we found out about St Leonard's.

- You make good progress as you move through the school, and results in tests get better and better. This is because your teachers teach you well and you work very hard.
- Your behaviour is outstanding and you look after each other so well. You enjoy working in groups and you like to help your classmates when they find things difficult. Members of the school council work hard to find out what you think and, as a result, have made your school even better.
- Your teachers and teaching assistants take excellent care of you. They make sure that everyone feels safe and secure. They also give you a lot of advice about how you can improve your work. Your headteacher and all your other teachers know exactly how to make sure that your school continues to stay so good.

This is what we have asked your school to do now.

- Work with you to make sure you reach higher standards in mathematics.
- Ensure that all of your lessons are as good as the best by making sure that when teachers plan work for you, it is not too easy or too hard, but just right for you.
- Make sure that you learn more about the beliefs and ways of life of people who come from different backgrounds from yourselves. Please continue to work hard and keep helping your teachers to make sure that St Leonard's becomes an even better place in which to learn. I send you my best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Michael Merchant Lead inspector