

Saint Lawrence's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121607
Local Authority	York
Inspection number	339978
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Roger Gill

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Tim Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Nellar
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed ten lessons taught by nine different teachers. They also made a series of short observations in lessons to study particular themes across the school. Inspectors held meetings with staff, governors and pupils, observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence including the school improvement plans, the tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress, and the work pupils were doing in their books. Inspectors studied the 86 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those completed by pupils and staff.

- Standards and achievement, by the end of Year 6, after a period of decline.
- The degree to which current teaching is at least satisfactory after considerable changes in personnel.
- The progress made by groups of pupils, particularly higher attaining ones.
- Community cohesion and the school's evidence for education about communities across the United Kingdom and global perspectives on communities and cultures.
- The quality of the school's self-evaluation in view of the gaps in staffing at a senior level.

Information about the school

St Lawrence's is an average sized school, which admits pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. There is an above average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages, many of whom speak English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The movement of pupils in and out of school during the year is high because it caters for pupils whose parents are attending the university from abroad and some from the travelling community. Since the last inspection the school has experienced a sizeable change in staffing and extensive building work. There is a new headteacher and acting assistant headteacher, and there are many new staff. The school has not had a deputy headteacher in post for most of the time since its last inspection. This post, and that of the assistant headteacher, will be filled from September 2010. The school has recently achieved National Healthy School status, the Basic Skills Award and Artsmark. There is a Children's Centre on site but it was not visited as part of this inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Lawrence's is a satisfactory school. After being judged as outstanding at the time of the last inspection, it suffered a series of acute difficulties that had the effect of lowering attainment and slowing pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics. It is recovering well.

Attainment, by the end of Year 6, fell progressively over the last three years. This represented inadequate progress. There were also falling standards in Year 2. However, greater stability and concerted efforts, led by the headteacher, are having a positive effect. Currently, pupils' attainment in Year 6 is higher than in the last three years. It is at a level expected for pupils' ages and represents at least satisfactory progress for most pupils. Their progress is good in mathematics. Achievement in reading and mathematics is better than that in writing. Many pupils lack the necessary accuracy for their age and ability in composing sentences, and in using adventurous vocabulary and a wide range of punctuation.

Teaching is now satisfactory; this is an improvement. In the past, falling standards were associated with weaknesses in teaching. Despite this, there is tendency for teachers to do most of the work. This often results in passive learning, with pupils lacking a clear enough idea about what their targets mean and how they need to improve their work. Average attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. However, too few pupils capable of higher than average attainment do well.

The positive climate in school, the supportive relationships and the well-devised procedures for keeping pupils safe are having a good effect on pupils' personal qualities. Pupils from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds get on well and enjoy learning together.

The school's capacity to continue these improvements is satisfactory. The headteacher and governors have a firm understanding about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Ideas about improvement are presented in their sound action plans for development. Furthermore, leadership beyond the headteacher is beginning to play a role in self-evaluation. A sizeable budget deficit has been eliminated.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in writing by the end of Year 6 by:
 - ensuring that teaching always uses information from assessments to plan appropriate work for pupils at all levels of ability

- strengthening the curriculum to broaden the scope of writing
- increasing the precision with which pupils use vocabulary and construct sentences.
- Increase opportunities for all pupils to progress well, particularly those capable of above average attainment by:
 - constructing lesson plans that contain demanding activities for higher attainers
 - accentuating learning that uses the skills of problem solving and a wider use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Make sure that pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve their work by:
 - providing assessable targets when marking work
 - discussing progress towards targets in lessons
 - enabling pupils to judge their own progress in reaching higher levels.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups such as travellers and pupils who speak English as an additional language, enjoy learning most of the time. Many say that mathematics and science are most interesting because, 'you do more practical things'. English, and writing in particular, is seen as less challenging. Despite learning being predominantly satisfactory, some is good when ICT is used to add extra appeal and pupils work in groups to solve problems that make them think hard. However, these good features are not widespread enough and progress lacks a sense of urgency in lessons where learning is sound rather than good. Most pupils do the work and succeed moderately but many are justified in feeling that their capabilities are not stretched far enough. This is why higher attaining pupils often jog along at the same rate as others when their tasks are not appreciably different from those set for the rest of the class. The inclusive climate in school results in pupils feeling safe and behaving well. They are keen to adopt healthy lifestyles as evidenced by their enthusiasm for physical education and their uptake of the healthy meals served at lunchtime. Many find ways to help make the school a happy and purposeful place in which to learn and find out about the lives of others – all of which makes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development good. Pupils' average attendance and achievement underpin their satisfactory preparation for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory now that the school has recovered from its most pressing difficulties. Planning for lessons increasingly takes account of previous learning. However, teaching is not yet adept enough in planning challenging enough tasks for all groups of pupils, particularly the higher attainers. Information from the assessment of pupils' learning is beginning to be used purposefully in mathematics to guide teaching but not so well in writing. The marking of pupils' work is thorough but pointers for improvement are often vague: pupils and teachers find it hard to measure progress against them. Moreover, the criteria for success, which form part of the planning for lessons, are not discussed enough in lessons to make sure that pupils are fully involved in judging their own progress.

The curriculum makes a sound contribution to pupils' learning and development in most instances. It contains strengths in special themed events such as 'Diversity Week' and the use of ICT to make short films that have won pupils' recognition at a regional level. However, opportunities for writing lack breadth and depth in practice, partly because subjects are not yet sufficiently dovetailed together to provide pupils with a chance to reinforce and extend their skills.

The care, support and personal guidance pupils receive are good. The sizeable group of potentially vulnerable pupils is supported well. The school has ample evidence about how behaviour has improved, dramatically in some cases, and pupils have confidence in their own achievement and ability to express their views. Governors, particularly the chair, and the more long-serving staff have ably assisted the headteacher, who has been a driving force in this aspect of the school's work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has provided consistently effective leadership over the last three years. However, without a full leadership team, the effectiveness of ambitious plans and methods to drive improvement has been limited. The upswing has begun but improvements are not yet firmly embedded. Nevertheless, the current average attainment and satisfactory achievement demonstrate that the school is back on course. Governance is satisfactory overall and some governors have involved themselves well in the strategic development of the school. For instance, they have used very effectively the selection process for the new deputy and assistant headteachers to meet the needs of the school. The effect of the school's promotion of equality is satisfactory. However, the potential of all pupils is yet to be maximized across the school. Parents, pupils and staff comment, with justification, on the good quality of the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils. Pupils feel safe and comfortable about seeking help with their problems. The positive sense of community within school is extended by beneficial links within the locality. Pupils learn well about the diversity of national and international cultures, partly because their school is so mixed and inclusive itself.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they experience a balanced blend of lively play, learning indoors and outside, and periods of listening well to others. They enter school with levels of attainment well below those expected for their age and leave at the end of Reception below, but not far below, the national expectations. The challenges for teaching are to manage the frequent movement of children in and out of school and the increasing proportions of pupils who arrive with very little English. These challenges are tackled well. A key factor in children's good progress is the way in which all adults reflect on children's learning to plan to the next steps.

The accommodation inside and out allows for freely chosen play, direct instruction and quiet reflection. Children learn in a setting in which they feel safe and well cared for. Good relationships are underpinned by well-known routines. Teaching is effective and is strengthened by the links made with parents through home visits and the open door policy that works well. This productive partnership with parents helps in the assessment of children's learning and development. Leadership has a clear grasp of how to improve what is provided and ensure the effectiveness of existing plans. The current aim, related to consistency in the quality of teaching within a new job-share structure, is developing well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were happy because their children enjoy school, are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and are cared for well. There were no particular trends in the very small number of criticisms received, the most being about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection found that the school has tackled the causes of bad behaviour, largely due to the rapid changes in staff, and it is now generally good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Saint Lawrence's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 232 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	51	45	44	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	61	38	37	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	51	50	44	43	7	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	42	52	50	6	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	47	49	48	5	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	50	46	45	5	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	42	56	54	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	38	37	56	54	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	43	55	53	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	41	50	49	10	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	37	59	57	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	51	50	45	44	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	51	47	46	3	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

27–28 April 2010

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Saint Lawrence's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, York, YO10 5BW

Thank you for your help when the inspection team visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you.

You go to a satisfactory school. This is really a success. When you think of the changes that have taken place in the last few years, it is an achievement for your headteacher, governors and some longer-serving staff to have set the school on its road to recovery. Your teachers now have a clearer idea of what you can and cannot do. Therefore, lessons are planned so that you can make quicker progress, particularly in mathematics. All this has taken time. So far your progress in reading and mathematics is satisfactory and it is improving. By comparison, it is your writing that lags behind. We discovered that, but many of you knew it already.

Some of you think that behaviour around school could be better but we think that the school has done enough to make it good at the moment. I agree with you, though, that the school could do more to help you know how well you are doing in lessons. We know that that you feel safe and well cared for because staff are kind, helpful and considerate. As a result, you come to school regularly and develop into well-rounded young people by the time you leave.

As well as involving you more in assessing your own progress and improving your writing, I have asked that those of you who can manage more challenging work be given it. You can all help by trying hard to reach new targets in writing, talking about your learning, in general, and enjoying any extra challenges that come your way. I am sure you can do it.

Yours sincerely,

Roger Gill

Lead inspector

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