

St Laurence Church of England (A) School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123199
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	340304
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Newey
Headteacher	Nicole Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. He observed nine lessons involving the work of three teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and governors. The inspector evaluated the school's work, and looked at school self-evaluation documents, external monitoring reports and development planning. Thirty-four questionnaires from parents and carers were analysed as well as those from school staff and the pupils.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the progress of girls and whether it is similar to that of the boys
- the use of assessment to support learning and its impact on increasing pupils' progress and their readiness for the next stage in their education
- the effectiveness of the school's work to improve pupils' understanding of the lives of other people elsewhere in the United Kingdom and across the world
- the use made of information and communication technology (ICT), especially to improve attainment in writing and for higher attainers.

Information about the school

St Laurence CofE Primary School is much smaller than most primary schools. The pupils live in the village and surrounding area. Only about a quarter of them are girls. Nearly all of the pupils come from White British families. No one speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is a little above average. The entitlement to free school meals is low. About a quarter of the pupils do not complete their whole primary education at the school.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught with pupils in Year 1. Those in Years 2 and 3 are taught together, as are the pupils in Years 4 to 6. Some of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attend the after-school club. This is managed privately and was not inspected.

The acting headteacher has been in post since January 2009 and there are many relatively new members of staff and governors.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Laurence C of E Primary is a good school. Under the first-class leadership of the acting headteacher, it has settled well after a period of uncertain staffing. Improvement has been at a good rate during the past year and a half. Good provision has been developed in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which enables the children to make good progress. The quality of teaching has risen, so that it is now consistently good throughout all three classes. The school has also formed close links with a school in Kenya that contributes well to its effective promotion of community cohesion. There is clearly good capacity to continue improvement, especially since school self-evaluation is based on rigorous procedures to check its strengths and weaknesses and a simple and effective system to track pupils' progress.

The school development priorities are well chosen with clearly expressed success criteria. These include challenging targets for pupils' progress and attainment. At present, standards are above average and progress is good for all ages and abilities, including generally in writing and for girls and the more able pupils. Standards are higher this year than last and progress is brisker. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Within the school development plan, two priorities stand out. First, to develop the system of assessment to support learning, and second, to broaden the opportunities for pupils to find out more about the lives of people elsewhere in the United Kingdom. These are sensibly chosen. While assessment has been improved, staff are still working to ensure pupils themselves have maximum input into the evaluation of their own work. School leaders and governors recognise that links with schools and other groups outside the local area are not wide enough and already have plans to link with a school in north-east England.

Parents and carers rate the school highly and many pay tribute to the effective leadership of the acting headteacher. They also judge that the personal development of their children is good. Their perceptions are accurate. Behaviour is outstanding and the pupils show great support and care for each other. Relationships are another excellent feature of the school. Attendance levels are high, such are pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of school. The good quality of care, guidance and support ensures all pupils make the same good progress. There is effective use made of ICT, which adds to the quality of the curriculum. The curriculum is also enhanced by the school's good partnerships with other local schools and visiting specialists.

The staff form a strong team who hold high expectations of the pupils. They all contribute well to the leadership and management of the school, not least in their ambitious approach to improvement. Governors provide well-judged and probing support and are meticulous in ensuring the budget is balanced and that there is sound

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financial security.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maximise the opportunities for pupils to contribute to the assessment of their own progress, both in discussion and in written comments in their books.
 - Broaden the range of partnerships with different communities elsewhere in the United Kingdom, especially the pupil-to-pupil links.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The way the school enables pupils to make good progress was well illustrated on the second morning of the inspection when the Year 4, 5 and 6 class worked to dramatise Lewis Carroll's poem 'Jabberwocky'. They did this with insight, innovative interpretation and with some superb stage direction. The teacher kept a watch to ensure all went to plan, but it was the pupils who created the improvisations. Twenty-four hours before, the same pupils responded with disbelief that a poem could be such nonsense. They found it difficult to read and to make sense of it. Such a transformation illustrates the way in which the pupils in school make good progress and reach above average standards, in this case in speaking and listening as well as reading and writing. The few girls in the class were very much at the centre of the production and their delight was as obvious as the 'snicker-snack' of the boys.

Over recent years, attainment in national assessments has varied from year to year but there is now evidence that it is stabilising in the above average range. Investigative science has been a particular focus for improvement due to some previous dips in results. The school's good work to raise attainment in science was very evident when Year 1 investigated camouflage in caterpillars and came to the realisation that the brighter the creature, the riskier it was to be out and about. The Reception children joined the fun and learned much about bugs and their homes as they did so.

The school's Church of England tradition is upheld in the personal development of the pupils. The ethos of the school is a blend of warm welcome, care, reflection and hard work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although the focus on other cultures is only satisfactory. Pupils identify closely with others in the school community and are particularly proud of the friendship partnerships that match an older pupil with a much younger one. Both sides gain much from such pairings.

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.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

After a period of uncertainty in staffing and some rapid changes in the teaching arrangements for one of the classes, teaching has been strengthened well. Lessons are frequently fun, which captures pupils' enthusiasms and interests well. The Year 2 and 3 class worked together constructively when writing stories, including one about 'Captain Underpants'. The quality of their work benefited from the way the teacher encouraged the pupils to talk together about their responses and ways in which they could be improved. This was an example of the use of assessment to support learning at its best. In some lessons, this is much less effective. Also, there are few opportunities for the pupils themselves to write comments in their books about the quality of their efforts and the progress being made.

In discussion, the pupils stressed that their teachers make learning inviting. It is usually productive and purposeful and pupils leave lessons wanting to return for more. The curriculum is well planned to appeal to pupils' interests and provides a rich range of experiences across each subject. The singing session in the hall was thoroughly enjoyed as all 41 pupils in the school stretched their vocal chords and perfected their mouthing of words. The programme of out-of-school activities, including the school-run breakfast club, effectively contributes to pupils' progress and personal development. The curriculum has the power to become outstanding as the focus on other cultures is expanded.

Everyone consulted in school, including staff, governors, parents and carers, and the pupils themselves, identified the good care, guidance and support provided amongst the school's key strengths. Vulnerable children are handled with great sensitivity, reliability

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and appropriateness. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils respond positively to the encouragement provided and, whether boy or girl, work hard to succeed. The effective support enables pupils who join or leave the school part way through their education to benefit while present. Staff have begun a sequence of home visits to support children's entry to Reception, in order to encourage a speedier start to learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has sustained its past successes well, even through the period of staff and governor change. The improved stability in staffing is allowing the chance to consolidate and make more consistent the procedures, systems and strategies to ensure the school is an effective place of learning. It is also providing the platform for further expansion and improvement of the school. The school's aspirations are displayed prominently, for instance in the entrance hall, where its caring mission stands out for all to see. Staff and governors understand that greater representation of the school's academic ambitions and successes would lead to further improvements in leadership and management.

Similarly, governors are keen to take a more obvious lead in analysing school performance, for example through the tracking of the graphs of attainment peaks found in the analytical documents made available to the school. The forthcoming training day for staff and governors is seen by them as the opportunity to set out their own targets for improved leadership and to build on the evaluations in this inspection report.

The school meets all the current statutory requirements and obligations well and effectively ensures the safeguarding of pupils. There is absolutely no tolerance of discrimination or bullying. Indeed, the school is a safe, secure, harmonious and happy place for the pupils. This is the outcome of the good safeguarding practice and the equality of opportunity that sees girls as much as boys thriving in school.

The promotion of community cohesion has been improved well during the last year or so. This has come with the development of close links with pupils at a Kenyan primary school. The school is determined that this success is taken further as it builds links with people in other communities within the United Kingdom to promote community cohesion further.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

A line of artificial caterpillars stretched across the school field was the source of great inquisitiveness by the Reception children. They had gleefully hunted in the hedge for these caterpillars, and like their Year 1 friends had come to the conclusion that a red caterpillar was not a good idea but that a dark coloured one might just escape the attention of a searching bird. This type of direct experience is common for the children in Reception. It is blended with more formal work led by the teacher and opportunities for them to choose and plan their own tasks. For example, three boys had great fun experimenting with the water chute and in watching carefully where the water splashed. The children make good progress from their different starting points and nearly all reach their learning goals by the time they move to Year 1. This includes the younger children with birthdays in the summer. Some children go beyond the expected levels, especially in mathematical development. Currently, work is afoot to improve the planning to enhance children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The caterpillar hunt contributed well to that priority.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is well led and managed by an enthusiastic coordinator. As in the rest of the school, the children's welfare, care and security are in capable hands. The teaching assistants take responsibility for some of these matters and they do this very competently.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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 number of returned questionnaires was very high and, as such, gives a very firm indication of the views of all parents and carers. These are virtually all very positive, with just two with concerns. The parents' positive views are shared by the inspector. The concerns mainly centre on the disruption to staffing in one class this year. While these concerns are understandable, it is evident that teaching quality is now good in that class. Many other parents and carers recognise this improvement and say as much on their questionnaires. There is also a little disquiet about the small numbers in school, especially girls. The pupils themselves share this concern. They told the inspector that the main improvement for their school was to increase class sizes a bit so they had even more friends. 'Especially girls,' added one. School leaders and governors are also concerned about the small numbers. Admissions in the coming September are very likely to be greater than previously and include a good boy-girl balance.

Every parent and carer gave the school a vote of confidence in the final question and are happy with their child's experience at this school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Laurence CofE 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 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 41 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	74	7	21	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	82	6	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	62	10	29	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	59	11	32	2	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	71	7	21	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	62	11	32	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	68	10	29	1	3	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)	21	62	11	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	65	11	32	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	74	8	24	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	65	10	29	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	85	4	12	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	79	7	21	0	0	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.

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.



28 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Laurence CofE Primary School, Warborough OX10 7DX

I will remember my visit to your school for a long time. The list of things that stood out as good is a long one and includes my memories of you hunting for caterpillars in the hedge, writing about 'Captain Underpants' and acting the role of the Jabberwocky. Getting ready to sing was another memorable experience. What breath control you all have!

Thank you all for helping me to find out about your school. I have written in my report that it is a good one, which I think you knew already. I have identified some key strengths of your school.

- When I visited your lessons, it was clear that you are making good progress.
- Your books showed me that you reach a good standard in your work.
- When we talked together, your politeness, friendliness and welcome stood out.
- I remember just how well behaved you were during your picnic in the playground.
- Each time I visited your class, you were being taught well and you were having fun in your learning.
- In my discussions with your headteacher, teacher and governors, I was impressed with how well organised they all are and how well they lead your school.
- Your parents and carers told me in their questionnaire that they are pleased with the education you have at school.

To help your school become even better, I have suggested two improvements:

- Sometimes, you are asked to talk about how well you are learning. This could happen more often and I think you would enjoy writing about this in your books.
- You are obviously pleased about having a pen friend in Kenya. It would be a good idea now to have a similar link with people somewhere else in this country.

I know you will have lots of ideas to help make these improvements. Good luck! Yours sincerely

David Carrington

Lead inspector

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