

St Laurence Church Infant School

Bunbury Road, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2DJ

Inspection dates 2–3 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher, governors and other leaders have excellent working relationships and, together, ensure that the quality of teaching throughout the school and pupils' achievement remain outstanding.
- Governors challenge senior leaders and are a visible presence in school. They know the school's strengths and are very quick to ensure it addresses any weaknesses.
- Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes towards learning and their behaviour is outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is made a high priority and ensures they are very well prepared for life in modern British democratic society.
- Pupils are kept exceptionally safe in school. They feel very safe and greatly appreciate the systems that keep them safe.
- All staff are highly effective practitioners. The performance of teachers is monitored very closely and senior leaders invest much time in successfully developing the skills of all the staff. The leaders model exemplary practice.
- Leaders' ongoing checks on pupils' progress inform them where and when to apply highly effective additional support when necessary.
- Pupils' excellent progress is reflected in the well-above average standards they attain.
- As a result of outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make excellent progress and considerable gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Best use is not always made of the outdoor learning areas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes. The headteacher observed many of the lessons jointly with inspectors. Indoor and outdoor learning was observed in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Sports coaches and teachers were observed sharing delivery of physical education lessons.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils’ books.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation such as: the school development plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body, policies, termly external moderation of pupils’ attainment and progress, and the school’s own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher, senior leaders and other leaders.
- A telephone conversation took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to groups of children and listened to some of them read.
- Questionnaires from 21 members of staff were analysed.
- Inspectors looked at the responses of 41 parents on the Parent View website. Inspectors had discussions with a number of parents during the inspection and considered emails that had been sent to Ofsted.

Inspection team

Mark Mallender, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Stephen Johnson	Additional Inspector
Pauline MacMillan	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school. It has three full-time Reception classes, which cater for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The proportions of pupils of minority ethnic heritage, or who speak English as an additional language, are below average.
- At 16% in the school, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is below average. This funding is for children in care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- At 7% in the school, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well-below average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate children's progress even more in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that the outdoor provision is always available and used imaginatively to inspire and engage children in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- There is an ethos of high expectations within the school and everyone aspires to reach the targets that the governors and senior leaders set. This sense of purpose results in teaching of high quality and very positive behaviour. Consequently, pupils reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 that are well above those seen nationally.
- The headteacher leads by example. She sets high standards and models, coaches and develops the staff to help them reach those standards. Leaders are very clear about what they expect and make sure these expectations apply in every classroom and around school. Consequently, teaching is consistently outstanding and leaders maintain the closest focus on maintaining pupils' high standards. The school has very strong capacity to maintain its excellent performance.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher ensure close focus on pupils' progress and use improvement strategies when needed. Key areas of the school's work have improved. For example, the drive to increase pupils' phonic skills (linking letters and sounds) by the end of Year 1 resulted in a higher proportion achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check than that seen nationally in 2014.
- Senior and subject leaders check and compare the standards of pupils' work with other schools and with external experts thoroughly every term to ensure that the assessments that are made in school are accurate. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment are confirmed to compare very well against national performance and any weaknesses identified for improvement are tackled.
- The exemplary work of the special educational needs coordinator provides a very clear and accurate picture of how well disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are achieving. Consequently, the school liaises closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive appropriate provision. Leaders ensure that staff receive training from other professionals to equip them well to support the specific needs of pupils and, as a result, their progress accelerates.
- All leaders ensure that pupils feel valued, any discrimination is addressed and parents are and feel supported. 'This school is brilliant' was the view of one parent. 'It goes above and beyond to support you and ensure that you don't feel isolated' was the view of another. An example of this exceptional support for pupils and parents can be seen in the network meetings the school sets up for the parents of pupils with special educational needs. These meetings have well-documented benefits to pupils' progress and personal development.
- Pupil premium funding is used very well and, as a result, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils has improved. The funding is used to release adults in school to work with pupils in their 'personalised support programme' to speed their progress effectively.
- The local authority provides limited support to the school. It is confident in the ability of the school's leaders to maintain the high standards seen over several years.
- Leaders responsible for year groups and subject areas are quick to respond to changes in curriculum and assessment, ensuring equality and opportunity for all pupils. There is a broad range of learning experiences planned for the pupils of which much is of a spiritual, moral, social and cultural nature. The provision ensures that the school's values are woven into everything staff and pupils do while also preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Keeping pupils safe is a high priority for all school leaders and staff, and all discharge this duty exceptionally well.
- Very effective use of the school's sports funding brings great improvements to pupils' physical education. In addition, the range of extra-curricular sports sessions have a positive impact on the well-being and fitness of the pupils.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is very effective. Governors have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and its priorities for improvement. They make sure they receive the most up-to-date training to enable them to challenge senior leaders, ensure that children are safe and standards remain high.
- Governors are competent in the analysis and interpretation of data on pupils' progress and attainment. They understand the findings from external performance analysis that they commission to inform further their grasp of how well the school is doing. They attend external moderation meetings, where the school checks with the help of external experts that the standards awarded to pupils by teachers are accurate when compared with those of other schools nationally and locally. Consequently, governors are able to compare standards in the school with those of other schools with confidence because they have insisted that standards are accurately assessed.
- The governors know that much teaching is outstanding and never less than good. They check on the impact of the management of teachers' performance. They manage the headteacher's performance very effectively. They apply procedures to reward staff for the quality of their teaching. Teachers' pay reflects this. If necessary they are not afraid to tackle staff underperformance.
- Governors are often in school and very active. Each governor is linked to one of the school's priorities. They have their own action plan that links to the school development plan and subject action plans, so that improvement priorities are coordinated well.
- The governing body has a strong overview of everything that happens in school and makes sure that all statutory requirements are applied, including for the safeguarding of pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct is exemplary. They are polite, happy and engage well with one another. They enjoy coming to school because they say it is fun and they have lots of friends.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards their learning. They engage well in lessons and approach tasks with great enthusiasm. Relationships are very warm in school and create a safe environment in which to learn. Pupils approach learning with great enthusiasm.
- Pupils are confident and willing to speak in public. For example, when pupils have reached the top of their 'star charts' they stand up in assembly in front of the whole school and their parents to tell the school community why they are being awarded their certificate. Pupils in Year 2 who had written prayers read them aloud to classmates, who responded respectfully.
- Leaders have high expectations regarding attendance and, consequently, it is high.
- The school provides opportunities for pupils to act democratically. An example of this is when the pupils elect school councillors following hustings and then all pupils have a vote. School council representatives take forward ideas to the council. Year 2 children are very keen to become playground leaders and act as role models.
- Pupils present their own fund-raising ideas for a school they support in Malawi.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Members of staff ensure that pupils are exceptionally safe and feel safe. Every pupil that inspectors met expressed the conviction of one who said quite simply, 'Our teachers look after us.'
- The care and support that staff give to pupils to overcome any personal difficulties are outstanding and deeply rooted in the school's values. This support often continues after pupils have moved on to the next stage of their education.

- Bullying, racist or behavioural incidents of any kind are extremely rare. Pupils describe the school as inclusive because, 'Everyone's included with God.' None of the pupils could cite examples of bullying. However, pupils say resoundingly that unkindness in any form is never tolerated by them or the adults in school.
- All parents who entered their views on the Parent View website stated that their children felt safe in school and nearly all parents felt that their children were well looked after. This view was supported by inspection findings, where all policies, procedures and statutory safeguarding requirements were seen to be fully applied.
- Adults help pupils to keep safe on the internet using informative video clips so that pupils recognise the dangers. One pupil commented, 'We need to think before sending messages to friends.'

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The teaching in all year groups is highly effective and ensures pupils' exceptional learning and achievement, including in literacy, reading and mathematics. Teachers and teaching assistants motivate pupils through carefully thought-out learning priorities. Staff make learning interesting and exciting and, as a result, all pupils quickly engage with it and make outstanding progress.
- Leaders make sure that staff have similar approaches to pupils' learning so pupils move smoothly between classes through the school.
- Teachers ask astute questions to check what pupils know and understand so they can clarify any misunderstanding and change the work if necessary. Pupils have many opportunities to talk to each other about what they are doing and they do this very well to make positive impact on each other's progress.
- Marking in books clearly shows pupils from a very young age what they have done well and what they need to do better. This marking clearly has impact, especially in literacy, because the pupils respond to it, act upon the advice given and improve their work.
- Teachers know how well each pupil is doing and what needs to be done next. They deploy teaching assistants very effectively to ensure immediate support is given to those pupils who need it. This ensures successful learning for all.
- Teachers are very aware of all pupils' abilities and challenge them in their learning accordingly. No time is ever wasted, for example, by the most able having to wait when they have successfully completed a task until the rest of the class is ready to move on. In a phonics session seen during the inspection, the teacher knew exactly when to advance the learning of the most able by giving them a challenge where they could apply their newly learned skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium are grouped according to their specific learning needs so support for them is well targeted. The help they get through the school's personalised support programme enables them to make rapid progress.
- Literacy, reading and mathematical skills are taught successfully across subjects. For example, throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults model the use of language and provide endless opportunities for constructive 'talk'. This results in pupils who enter school with language skills below those typical for their age, some of whom are of minority ethnic heritage, able to use English very confidently by Year 2.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children from all ethnic heritages make excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Reception most achieve a good level of development. Many children achieve exceptionally well in gaining knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of learning.

- Pupils from all social and ethnic backgrounds continue to make outstanding progress throughout Years 1 and 2, resulting in the well-above average standards they attain in reading, writing and mathematics. The very large majority reach the nationally expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check in Year 1.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported extremely well by strategies that leaders and staff apply. As a result, these pupils make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional funding are given highly effective individual support and, consequently, achieve nearly as well as pupils nationally. Successful strategies over the last year have resulted in the gap between these pupils and others in the school closing significantly, so that they are no more than one term behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- The most-able pupils achieve exceptionally well in most lessons. Consequently, the most able of each successive year group continue to reach the high Level 3 and above year on year in reading, writing and mathematics – well ahead of the standards seen nationally by Year 2.
- Pupils enjoy reading throughout the school and talk enthusiastically about the books they have read. Pupils who do not find reading easy are taught excellent strategies to help them sound out and understand the new or difficult words they come across.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, understanding and skills broadly typical for their age. Children make exceptional progress across all areas of learning so that they are thoroughly prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Excellent leadership and management ensure that children's learning is constantly checked. Consequently, the right steps in learning are taken by each child and any gaps in attainment filled.
- The high expectations of what children can achieve start from the moment they enter and reflect the excellent teaching they receive. Organisation within the Reception classrooms and work in children's 'learning journeys' evidence staff expectations of what the children can achieve. From the youngest age, adults point out to the children what they do well, for which they are often rewarded, and what they need to do next to improve. This approach results in children making excellent progress and feeling proud about their achievements.
- A wide range of learning opportunities is made available for the children both inside and outside, and they work, play and explore enthusiastically alongside their friends. However, use of the outside areas is not always imaginative and, sometimes, does not inspire children's interest and learning enough. Children cannot always freely access outdoor learning when appropriate.
- Children are very cooperative with each other and have warm relationships with adults. They become very involved and enthused by their learning experiences and are keen to involve others. For example, they were extremely keen to share with others the patterns they made with different materials.
- While children are working independently in their activities, adults talk with them – gently probing and asking questions. These exchanges further their learning well and enhance their speaking and listening skills.
- Children behave exceptionally well, but the adults they work with are always very vigilant about their safety.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103459
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	443800

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Brown
Headteacher	Helen Hickman
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2007
Telephone number	0121 4642888
Fax number	0121 4643424
Email address	enquiry@stlrnci.bham.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

