



St Laurence Church Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103416
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276912
Inspection dates 21 February 2006 to 22 February 2006
Reporting inspector Christine Field AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bunbury Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		West Midlands B31 2DJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01214 646 499
Number on roll	356	Fax number	01214 647 393
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Sarah Brown
Date of previous inspection	3 April 2000	Headteacher	Mr Stuart Andrew

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large Church of England school is located in Northfield, a suburb to the south-west of Birmingham city centre. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with around 20% from other minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small proportion of pupils is learning to speak English as a new language. Some 10% of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. The profile of pupils' attainment at the start of Year 3 covers a wide range but is typically well above average overall.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Laurence Church of England Junior School provides a good education for its pupils and the school's own evaluation agrees. The school consults widely with parents who are rightly proud of the very positive learning ethos that encourages and enables their children to make good progress. Standards are consistently well above average in all core subjects. Teaching is good overall, but pupils do not always receive work that is challenging enough, especially higher attainers in mathematics.

Strong Christian values help pupils develop very well into thoughtful and responsible individuals. They benefit from an outstanding programme of visits and activities and rightly feel safe and secure because the school provides excellent pastoral care. Procedures to guide pupils' achievements are satisfactory. However, marking does not always show pupils how to improve and there are not enough opportunities for them to review their targets and evaluate how well they are doing.

The decisive leadership of the headteacher ensures that there are well-chosen priorities for improvement and strong teamwork among staff. The school has an accurate understanding of how well it is performing through a thorough analysis of data. Senior leaders have satisfactory systems in place to take stock of pupils' achievements but findings are not recorded consistently enough. There has been good progress since the last inspection, notably in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and the development of management and governance roles. There is a well prioritised school plan in place to help shape the school's future direction. However, there is limited information about the timing of actions or explicit measures of success and this restricts the scope for reviewing the impact of improvement. Notwithstanding this, the school has secure capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the work planned meets the needs of higher-attaining pupils so that they are more consistently challenged, particularly in mathematics.
- Sharpen teachers' marking and use of targets to support pupils' next steps in learning and provide regular opportunities for pupils to review personal progress.
- Refine the school plan so that it includes a clear timeline of action and includes specific criteria for measuring impact.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards achieved by Year 6 pupils in the 2005 national tests were well above average overall. More pupils reached the highest standards in English and science than in mathematics.

The school has undertaken a thorough analysis of data to assist the raising of standards, with particular attention to improving achievement in mathematics. As a result, pupils

in danger of under-achieving are closely monitored and given effective extra support to help them move on. Setting arrangements for higher-attaining pupils enable them to make good progress. However, in some class-based mathematics lessons, the match of work is not always challenging enough for this group of pupils and limits their progress.

Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities benefit from specific work programmes that support consistently good progress towards their individual targets.

Targets agreed for this year's national tests in Year 6 are realistic, with pupils on track to meet them. However, the school recognises that targets need to be even more challenging in mathematics in the future. The tracking of pupils' progress towards these targets is developing soundly, although the process is not yet consistent or rigorous enough to pinpoint where progress quickens or slackens.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school and especially appreciate the extra-curricular activities on offer, the friendly teachers, and the many opportunities to take on roles of responsibility. Behaviour is almost always very positive. Pupils say that there is occasional misbehaviour but that staff deal with it well. Attendance is good.

The pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils are involved in numerous charitable endeavours, such as the 'Lenten Project', that gives them deep insights into the lives of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils make an excellent contribution to their community. For example, they raised the money to equip a multi-sensory room at a local hospital. Pupils have a very keen sense of social responsibility and a strong voice in decision-making through the school council. They are well aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and know why it is important to keep safe and consistently adopt safe practices. For example, they are currently involved in making the playground a better place for play. Pupils are prepared well for the world of work through innovative projects, such as setting up and running the 'Lucky Message Muffin Company'. Such opportunities draw well on personal initiative and enterprise skills. Pupils develop a sound cultural awareness through music activities as well as through geography and modern language topic work. They increasingly understand issues about multi-cultural Britain.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. There are several reasons for this. Teachers create a positive atmosphere in lessons so that pupils are eager to take part. New learning is clearly explained and presented so pupils readily appreciate new concepts. Teachers use new technology skilfully to motivate pupils and this is a significant

improvement since the previous inspection. Relationships are very good, with teachers and pupils trying to do their best for each other.

High expectations, a brisk pace and a good level of challenge ensure that pupils in the mathematics extension sets learn successfully. However, some class-based mathematics lessons, whilst satisfactory, are not stimulating enough to challenge the higher-attaining pupils sufficiently. Not all lessons are planned carefully enough to identify the learning gains expected of pupils of different abilities. The use of targets to help pupils focus their next steps in learning is developing. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to review their targets and evaluate how well they are doing. There are some examples of marking that helps pupils to improve, but this is not consistent, resulting in some pupils not knowing what they need to do to improve their work.

Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities work from a good programme and learn well. The support of teaching assistants is very effective and a key factor in helping these pupils learn successfully.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of most pupils well. Good provision is made for those with musical or sporting talents but provision for those who are artistic is less in evidence. The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is good and well organised. On occasions, higher-attaining pupils are not provided for well enough in mathematics.

The provision for ICT has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the opportunities to use interactive whiteboards in lessons and also enjoy the colourful illustrations that teachers use to bring learning alive.

Pupils benefit from an outstanding programme of visits and activities. For example, pupils' understanding about the world of work is very well fostered through design and technology projects. Following a visit to three major car plants to see production, pupils designed and made their own motorised vehicle and then tested it to see if it would carry an egg a distance of 10 metres.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Pastoral welfare is outstanding and reflects the very positive Christian ethos of the school. Rigorous attention is paid to safeguarding pupils, with robust systems in place to assess and deal with risks. Pupils feel safe in school and attribute this to the strong commitment shown by all adults. Child protection arrangements are effective, with well-forged links in place with a range of social, educational and medical support agencies.

Pupils are given good personal support by staff who know them well and are responsive to their needs. The use of assessment data to guide pupils' learning is developing but is not yet used well enough to set individual targets for future progress.

The school has forged a strong partnership with parents and they are particularly pleased with the levels of care provided for their children. Parents are very supportive of all the school's work and are eager to take part. Links with local schools are good and the strategies to support pupils transferring from the neighbouring infant school are highly effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and are reflected in pupils' good academic and social achievement. The headteacher sets high expectations and positive direction to the work of the school and has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school judges what it does honestly and accurately and inspectors agree with its evaluations. The systems it has in place to check and assess performance are effective but the targets it is setting for higher-attaining pupils' achievements, especially in mathematics, are not sufficiently challenging. The school has identified a number of ways in which to improve this process and they form sensible priorities. However, the plan in place to guide improvement lacks detail and this limits the scope for reviewing at more regular intervals the impact of the strategies being pursued.

In the wake of workforce reforms, the senior and middle managers are developing their revised roles, and taking a more active part in a wide range of monitoring and evaluation activities. An effective system for monitoring teaching and learning is being implemented to good effect. This marks a good improvement since the last inspection. Staff view the system very positively in supporting their professional development. Governors are supportive and fulfil all required responsibilities. Their role as critical friend is developing well. Very good partnerships with parents, community and church add extra value to the quality of education provided. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and has secure capacity to become even more effective. The school provides good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for giving us such a warm welcome during our visit and for all your help around the school. We thoroughly enjoyed chatting over the super lunch together.

What we liked best:

- Most of you make good progress and reach good standards in your work.
- You behave well and grow into thoughtful individuals.
- Teachers make learning enjoyable and expect you to work hard.
- You have an excellent choice of activities after school to take part in.
- Adults in the school take excellent care of you and make sure you are healthy and safe.
- The headteacher and governors have your best interests at heart as they work together to take the school forward.

What we think the school can do to improve:

- Ask teachers to always give you work that is at the right level of challenge, especially those of you who sometimes find the work too easy, and use marking to show you ways to improve.
- Provide time for you to discuss your learning targets with teachers to see how well you are doing and what you need to do next.
- Make sure everyone knows what the school is doing to make it even better so that they can all help and keep a check on improvements.