

St Laurence Church Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103416
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323818
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2009
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Brown
Headteacher	Jane Lindsay
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2006
School address	Bunbury Road Northfield Birmingham B31 2DJ
Telephone number	01214 646499
Fax number	01214 757393

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very large school has more parents wishing to send their children there than there are places available. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Most pupils are from a White British background, with small numbers from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school shares a governing body with the local infants' school, with which it collaborates to provide care before and after school. The junior school provides a breakfast club for children from the age of four and an after-school club for pupils in Years 3 and 4. No children from the Early Years Foundation Stage were attending the breakfast club at the time of the inspection. A new headteacher took up post at the start of January 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Standards are above average, which represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' above average standards on joining the school. Pupils make steady progress in all years as a result of the satisfactory teaching and curriculum that they receive. The most able pupils do well because they like tackling the very difficult work they are given. They are very keen to answer questions, but this can disadvantage middle ability pupils when the teacher only asks for responses from those with their hands up. As a result, middle ability pupils do not get the same attention and make less progress than others.

Parents rightly praise the wide range of trips and other activities on offer. Pupils say that they are one of the main reasons for their good enjoyment of school, which is reflected in their above average rates of attendance. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good overall. Pupils are polite and very well behaved. They get on very well with one another and with their teachers. They have a good understanding of the school and local community, but they have a limited knowledge of what life is like in other parts of Britain that have different characteristics from their local area. The care, guidance and support that pupils receive is satisfactory. Pupils feel safe in the school and know they have an adult to whom they can turn if they have a problem. The academic guidance they receive is satisfactory. Marking is frequent and regular, but does not always check that advice has been followed or that corrections have been carried out. Pupils have target cards, but these are too vague to provide clear guidance on what a pupil should be aiming for.

The school has made sound progress since it was last inspected, as a result of satisfactory leadership and management. The school's leaders, including the governors, have successfully promoted an ethos of hard work combined with an enjoyment of education. They have not ensured that the school meets its duty to promote community cohesion, because pupils are not taught enough about other communities in Britain, and because the school fails to evaluate any provision it makes. The school's evaluation of what it provides is too generous, partly because middle and senior leaders, other than the headteacher, are not given responsibility for monitoring or evaluating aspects of the school's work. However, recent checks on teaching, carried out by the new headteacher, have provided a clear and accurate picture of the main strengths and areas for improvement. Some of these latter areas, such as increasing the challenge for more able pupils, have already been successfully tackled. This demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Meet statutory requirements by ensuring that pupils have a good understanding of the lives of people in communities different from their own and by evaluating the impact of any actions that are taken to improve community cohesion.
- Ensure that all senior and middle managers play a full and effective role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.
- Ensure that pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work through the better use of marking and more personalised targets.
- Ensure that middle ability pupils can play as great a part in lessons as others, so as to improve their progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards on entry to the school vary between above and well above average from year to year. The school's results in Year 6 national tests also vary, in line with the standards on entry. So if pupils arrive with above average standards, they leave with above average standards. The school has taken successful action to address the previous underachievement of girls in mathematics. Now achievement is satisfactory in all subjects, both for boys and girls. However, middle ability pupils still do not do as well as the most able, who are now making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy almost all aspects of school and join in with enthusiasm when given exciting things to do. Their attendance is good even when the weather makes getting to school difficult. The class and school councillors are good at collecting and expressing the wishes and suggestions of pupils. They would like to be asked to make more decisions and to have some money to spend on their ideas. Pupils enjoy the range of sport on offer, but although they have learnt about healthy eating they still choose crisps and sweets over fruit, even when it is provided free of charge in the after-school club. Pupils feel protected at school and some of the older pupils are beginning to think about suitable behaviour in risky situations. They say that bullying is unusual and never serious and most would feel confident telling their teacher if they had a problem. Pupils possess good social skills. They work well together on projects and on residential trips, and develop good economic skills during charity fund-raising, like the Lenten Project. They have a strong sense of right and wrong. Older pupils particularly enjoy discussing issues where there is no clear 'right' decision. Pupils develop well spiritually. They visibly express their sense of wonder when, for example, seeing the Rose Window at York Cathedral, or watching a lamb being born during a farm visit. Pupils help to make the school a better place and are keen to take on responsibility. They do occasional things for the local community but their understanding of the varied faiths, cultures and traditions of British and international society is limited. Their strong basic skills and economic understanding give them a good basis for their secondary education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy going to lessons. They like their teachers and the way that they can learn by playing games, such as getting 'four in a row' in their mathematics lessons. Teachers are aware that there are some very able pupils in their classes, and set them, and others, suitably demanding work. The pupils readily respond to such challenges and work hard to get the right answers. However, very often it will be the most able who get the answer the quickest and are first to put their hands up. This leads to middle ability pupils not being given enough time to think, and they are able to avoid the teacher's attention by just sitting quietly, safe in the knowledge that they will not be asked a question. Outside the classroom, pupils demonstrate a very good

degree of independence, but this is not always capitalised upon in lessons which are sometimes too tightly structured and directed by the teacher.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum satisfactorily promotes academic achievement, and is good at encouraging pupils' enjoyment and promoting their personal development. Pupils develop good skills in their information and communication technology lessons, but would understandably like more opportunities to then use these skills in other subjects. A large number of pupils readily take part in a wide range of enrichment activities, such as chess, many sports and music. Pupils also enjoy educational and residential visits such as those to York and Malvern. These contribute well to pupils' social and moral development. There are good links with the local parish church to promote pupils' spiritual development. While a variety of visitors into school, such as African drummers and Indian dancers, promote pupils' understanding of other cultures, regular links with other local multicultural communities are limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All safeguarding procedures are in place and fully meet statutory requirements for child protection. Care is taken to ensure the school buildings and grounds are safe and thorough risk assessments are carried out before trips. The school provides good staffing levels for trips and for the breakfast and after-school clubs. These clubs provide a valuable service for parents and carers who work full-time. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive suitable support to ensure that they make satisfactory progress. The school brings in a range of outside professionals to help whenever necessary. All pupils have targets, but these are often the same for all pupils in a class or year so they are not sufficiently detailed for an individual pupil. Marking provides some advice as to how to improve work, but the extent to which pupils take the advice or do their corrections is not always checked.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The school's leaders, including governors, have established a calm atmosphere where pupils expect to work hard and enjoy themselves at the same time. The new headteacher has moved swiftly to start improving provision and the progress made by pupils. Assembly time, for example, has been reduced to provide an extra half a day of lessons each week. Checks on lessons have pinpointed where improvements can be made and actions are already in place to address them. As leaders and managers, staff morale is high as they look forward to developing their roles. At present, managers other than the headteacher, play little part in monitoring progress and improving provision. Finances are very well managed. Although the school has made satisfactory progress since it was last inspected, it has not kept up to date with all legislation and does not meet the requirements to promote community cohesion. The school has not contrasted the school's community with others nationally or evaluated any provision that it makes to improve pupils' understanding of other communities.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Laurence Church Junior School, Birmingham, B31 2DJ

Many thanks for helping us when we visited your school. We thought you were very friendly and polite. We were impressed by how well you behaved and got on with one another.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. You make steady progress and leave well prepared for secondary school. We understand why you enjoy coming to school so much, because, as you told us, the lessons are fun and there are lots of extra activities on offer. You clearly love solving problems that make you think really hard and many of you are very keen to put your hand up and answer questions. Others are sometimes a bit slower to put their hands up, because they haven't had enough time to think, or sometimes they just don't bother because they know that someone else will be asked. So, we have asked your teachers to make sure that all of you can make good progress by giving you a bit more time to think, and by asking people who do not have their hands up too. You can help, by putting your hand up whenever you think you know the answer. You all know right from wrong and know a lot about the area in which you live. However, you don't know as much about other areas. So we have asked the people who run the school to make sure you know more about how other people live in different parts of the country.

The people who run the school are working hard to make it a better place. They have made it a place where you feel safe and happy. This makes it easier for you to learn. We think that the school could get better even more quickly if more of the teachers helped to run it. So we have asked them to do more checking, to find out exactly what could be done to help you learn even more quickly. One thing that we found was that the targets on your target cards are a bit too general and don't tell you exactly what you need to do to improve. So we have asked the teachers to give you more precise targets, and to then make sure you know how to reach them by putting more helpful comments on your work. You can help here, by making sure you always follow the advice you are given and do your corrections when you get something wrong.

With all best wishes for your futures.

David Driscoll Lead inspector