

St Leonard's CofE (C) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124248
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359616
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Howard Stemp
Headteacher	Julie Lane
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed, in part or in full, seven lessons and all three of the school's class teachers. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, groups of pupils, the school's local authority link advisor and spoke with the school improvement partner.

Inspectors looked at policies and reviewed documents and the data the school has on pupils' progress. They scrutinised 36 parent questionnaires and spoke with eight parents and carers, including a parent governor.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective is the school in judging the progress pupils' make?
- How well is assessment information used in planning lessons that are always right for each pupil?
- How effective have senior leaders been in developing the school since the last inspection?

Information about the school

St Leonard's is a much smaller than average sized school that serves, primarily, the region around the village of Dunston. Most parents and carers elect to send their children to the school from the catchment areas of other schools. Almost all pupils are of a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below that found in most other schools; the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is marginally higher. The headteacher is temporarily absent and the senior teacher is leading the school. Since the last inspection the school has gained a number of awards, including the local authority's Eco School award.

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 Leonard's is a good school. Pupils make good progress over a broader curriculum than was the case at the time of the last inspection. They are prepared well as learners and as young people who expect to be successful when they meet the challenges of their next school. One parent said, 'I chose to send my child to St Leonard's and I am very glad that I did. She is enjoying it here, is doing very well in her learning and the school is helping her grow into a really nice young person.'

Children join the Reception Year at about the levels of development expected for them nationally in most of the areas of early learning, but lag marginally behind in using language and in their social development. In a safe and secure place, they settle well. They make good progress over the year so that when they join Year 1 they have caught up with expectations in using language and in their social development. In the other areas of early learning they do marginally better than expected. Over Years 1 to 4, pupils make good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science against their targets for learning. When they leave school, they attain at levels beyond those nationally expected in these subjects. They do equivalently well in the other subjects, especially in learning French and, because of the impact of the link with the nearby specialist sports school, in physical education.

St Leonard's is a warm and welcoming place where staff and pupils are very comfortable with each other. The right of every child to be equally valued permeates the ethos of the school, is driven by the link with the local church and helps pupils gain a clear idea of what is right and wrong. They make difficult choices well, including those to do with staying safe and keeping healthy. Each pupil is known and valued as an individual. They are cared for and supported outstandingly well. It is not surprising that they say they 'like' their school very much, 'feel safe' there and 'make friends' easily. They attend regularly. Behaviour is outstandingly good in lessons and throughout the day.

Progress is good because teaching is good. The small number of pupils in each class means that teachers know their pupils well as learners and as young people. Most often, they make good use of this information in planning lessons that match well with each pupil's learning needs. Nevertheless, information available from the school's assessment procedures is not precise enough to help plan lessons that always fully match the learning needs of each pupil. As a result, in a small number of lessons pupils practise what they have already learned or they find their tasks too

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difficult, and progress is compromised because of this. With the completion of the information and communication technology (ICT) suite, pupils gain a much better experience of ICT as a subject and as a tool for supporting learning in the other subjects. This, and the development of the creative curriculum, has resulted in a broader, more cohesive learning package than was the case at the time of the last inspection.

Since the last inspection the headteacher and her colleagues have worked hard and effectively in improving the school. Pupils have much improved access to ICT; a better organised and wider range of learning experiences; very effective links with parents and carers; and a new tracking system is being developed to recognise how well pupils are doing in their learning. These show the capacity for sustaining improvement to be good. Governors are led well. Through the accurate self-evaluation procedures and their regular visits to school they have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses. Collectively, they have the expertise and desire to challenge and support the headteacher in continuing to drive the school further forward, for example, in their expectations that pupils' progress should improve still further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Meet the expectations of governors and continue to improve progress in learning by:
 - sharpening the use of assessment information in planning lessons so that they are made up of tasks that effectively challenge each pupil.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The small size of the year cohorts makes it difficult to judge trends in progress over the years. Last year (2010), for example nine pupils were formally assessed on the standardised assessment tasks at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2), and seven pupils left at the end of Year 4. Nevertheless, through good moderation procedures senior leaders have a clear perception of the progress pupils are making, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Data for each of the last three years shows that pupils at the end of Key Stage 1, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, do better in reading, writing and mathematics than do equivalent pupils nationally. Furthermore, during Years 3 and 4 many pupils pull further away from the levels expected of them nationally as they continue to exceed the targets set for them. This means that compared with national expectations, on average, the school is adding good value to pupils' progress, including adding value to the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

When planning meets the needs of all pupils in the class, outstanding progress can result. This was the case in a lesson in English when pupils needed to use 'exciting' words to describe a rain forest. The most capable writers completed a paragraph

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with due regard to grammar and punctuation, the next group wrote an individual sentence, while the other pupils selected adjectives from a word bank. All pupils met the lesson objective, which was to gain knowledge of the power of adjectives in bringing descriptions to life. Pupils were excited about their learning, worked hard at their work and made outstanding progress in learning new adjectives and their correct location in sentences.

In a cohesive community with a 'family' feel pupils become confident as learners who show outstanding attitudes to their work. They grow to be well balanced young people. In this, they gain from the many opportunities they have to take part in the day-to-day running of the school, including being members of the school council, and acting as register, lunch time and playground monitors. Their high take up of the after school sports clubs reflects their understanding of the need to maintain a healthy life style. The very strong links with the nearby church emphasise the importance of spiritual virtues such as trust, belief and friendship. Pupils learn about the cultural beliefs and traditions of those from other countries and ethnic origins through the curriculum. The school is a focal point in the life of the village and pupils regularly take part in the village festivals and other events. These close links are very much appreciated by parents and carers, some of whom attended the school themselves.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

There is a broad range of capabilities in the multi-year classes. Often, the challenge

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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of meeting the different learning needs of each pupil is met well. When it is fully achieved, as was the case in the lesson in English, outstanding progress is the result. However, in some lessons learning tasks do not always match well enough the learning needs of every pupil. In these lessons, tasks are sometimes too hard or too easy and teaching is not wholly effective in promoting maximum learning and achieving an outstanding rate of progress.

The availability of the 'new' ICT suite contributes to making the curriculum a more cohesive package. Most of the foundation subjects are taught as topics in an inter-linked way. Pupils are excited about using the internet to research their topics because they see their learning as important and relevant. An innovative addition to the curriculum is the focus on eco work. For pupils who have been brought up in a rural setting, tending their class's allotment and caring for bees add both interest and significance. Visits to local places, such as the Cannock Toy Museum, Cannock Chase and Shugborough Hall are well used in supporting classroom learning. The residential visit to a nearby outdoor activity centre for those in Years 3 and 4 provides a very valuable opportunity to practise independence and social skills and to gain self confidence.

In a nurturing environment, pupils' needs are met extremely well so that they thrive as learners and as growing young people. Pupils who require continuing special attention, for example those identified as dyslexic, gain precise and appropriate help. Records show the positive effect that specific support has in reducing barriers, for example the frequency and intensity of inappropriate behaviour, and also in overcoming difficulties with learning. Good arrangements that are well managed promote a smooth and easy transition through school and to the next school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Since her appointment just before the time of the last inspection, the headteacher has been successful in improving the school. Staff and governors are unified behind her and her vision for continued improvement. Governors are trained well and provide good support in her drive to provide outstanding provision for pupils. They and the senior team know the school well enough to realise that improved planning for individualised learning is the key to continuing to raise standards and to promote even better progress.

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The links with outside agencies provide valuable specific help and advice to staff, pupils and their parents and carers and contribute to making the care and support of pupils a strength of the school. Expert and quick help, for example from speech and language therapists, the behaviour support team and the educational psychologist contributes to each pupil having equivalently open access to all the school offers. Any discrimination is very well tackled. Parents and carers make an outstanding contribution to the success of the school. Currently six spend at least one morning or afternoon a week at school. Through listening to pupils read and helping them with their number work, they make a valuable contribution to pupils' overall good progress. There is, routinely, a good uptake for meetings and courses, such as the latest 'Sums for Mums' course that provided guidance and tips on helping their children with mathematics at home. Over the years, the support provided by the Parent, Teachers and Friends Association has been considerable, and still is. Additional funds are regularly provided and direct support for new initiatives, such as the current one of creating a pond suitable for the study of pond life, will add further breadth to pupils' learning.

Safeguarding procedures are very thorough. All who are linked with the school take the safety and security of the children as being of paramount importance. Parents and carers are confident in their judgement that their children are safe, secure and very well cared for at school. Due regard has been paid to community cohesion. The school is a central element in village life. Links with the other schools in the local cluster are well established, as is the link with the middle school. National and international connections are being established, but pupils have a long history of supporting national charities, most recently 'Shelter'.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
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

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

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Children in the Reception Year have a good start. They settle quickly because their base is a welcoming and considerate place. They develop strong and trusting relationships with their adults and this helps them become confident when they make friends with other children and also as beginning learners. Teaching is routinely good. The balance of teacher-led and child-initiated experiences, both indoors and outside, is good. Children are provided with regular opportunities to explore their own learning, as a first step to gaining the beginning skills of independent learning. They are learning what is right for them because their experiences closely match with the national skills-based curriculum. The reception base is a calm, well ordered and purposeful place because leadership and management are both good.

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

A good proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Almost all, and each of those who spoke with an inspector, were uniformly supportive of the work of the school. They especially liked the 'family' feel of the school, that their children enjoy being at school, the way their children are known as individuals and the way staff look after and care for their children. They like the way they are able to support the work of the school, as individuals and through the Parent, Teacher and Friends Association. A very small number registered a concern about the success of the school in dealing with inappropriate behaviour. The inspection judged that the behaviour of almost all children and pupils was outstandingly good and made an important contribution to their good progress. The few pupils who, because of their special educational needs, have difficulty in always fully controlling their behaviour gain specialist help and support. Their records show substantial improvement in dealing with their own difficulties. Their inappropriate behaviour interrupts their learning in only a very small number of lessons. When this does happen, teachers and their support assistants are expert at making sure that the learning of the others in the lesson is rarely compromised.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Leonard's CofE (C) First 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 56 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	53	17	47	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	64	13	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	36	20	56	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	28	21	58	2	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	36	21	58	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	39	19	53	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	58	11	31	2	6	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)	14	39	12	33	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	56	11	31	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	42	16	44	0	0	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	39	19	53	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	42	18	50	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	58	11	31	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 all 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	59	36	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.

9 February 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Leonard's CofE (C) First School, Stafford, ST18 9AG

It was lovely for me and my colleague to meet and spend time with you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us so welcome. We found your school to be a good school. These are some of the things we especially liked:

- that you say you are safe and secure there and that you are looked after very well
- your outstanding behaviour in lessons and throughout the school, which helps you in your learning and in the way you are growing up
- the good teaching and, because of this, the good progress you make in your learning that prepares you well for the challenges of your next school
- the really good way in which your parents and carers are working to help the adults at school make it an even better place.

There is one thing I have asked your leaders to do to make your school is better still. I want them to make sure your teachers use the assessment information they have on each of you always to plan lessons that have just the right amount of challenge for you; not too easy or too hard. If they do this well, each one of you will make even better progress in your learning.

Of course, you can all help too, by always behaving as well as you did over the time of our visit and by continuing to work hard all the time.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins
Lead inspector

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