

St Laurence CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123529
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	314627
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Spanner
Headteacher	Kevin Bryant
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	Jockeyfield Ludlow SY8 1TP
Telephone number	01584 872766
Fax number	01584 872766

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

whether pupils' achievement is as good in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 as it is in Years 3 to 6

whether pupils' personal development and well-being is good, as judged by the school, or is strong enough to be judged outstanding

the effectiveness of systems of assessment in supporting pupils' achievement.

Evidence was gathered from:

discussions with leaders, a governor, pupils, parents and staff

visits to all classes

scrutiny of pupils' work

observation of other aspects of the school day such as assembly, break and lunchtime

analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Laurence C of E is an average-sized primary school. A small, but increasing, number of pupils do not speak English at home. Although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, the number with statements of special need is higher than one would expect to find in a school of this size.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It is close to completing its journey towards being outstanding. The key to its success is the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, recognised by parents who say such things as, 'The headteacher's skill in motivating children and staff alike is excellent.' He is very ably supported by the senior management team and all staff and governors. In particular, the process of self-evaluation, which involves all staff and governors in a self-evaluation day, has built an extremely accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. This has meant that, as one parent typically said, 'There are constant efforts to improve the already excellent provision.'

The whole ethos of the school is concerned with providing pupils with as wide a range of opportunities as possible and preparing them to be responsible and worthwhile members of society. The curriculum is exemplary and is one of the key reasons for pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school. 'There is always something exciting to look forward to,' as one pupil put it. Creative subjects have a very high profile. For example, all pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn the violin and all pupils in Years 3 to 6 can borrow musical instruments and have subsidised lessons. Concerts are a highlight and parents say they 'need to bring a tissue,' such is the level of performance. Artists in residence are a regular feature and the stunning results of the pupils' work with these visitors are proudly displayed around the school. The range of other opportunities, such as activities and visits, is exceptional. For example, on the day of the inspection, the Nursery children went out to Forest Schools and Year 5 went on a trip to a farm for the day.

A further major strength of the school is the very high level of pastoral care shown by all adults. One of the many parental comments on this aspect put it very accurately when they said, 'The headteacher and all staff care for, and care about, the children above and beyond the call of duty. Who could ask for more?' The end result of this caring is that pupils are developing extremely well into responsible and responsive young people. Their behaviour is impeccable and they play safely and sensibly and say they feel very secure in school. Pupils are extremely well aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and take full advantage of the many sporting activities. Break times are particularly active, with a wide variety of play materials to encourage activity. Older pupils are responsible for the very good token system used for distribution and collection of these materials. However, pupils do not always put their knowledge into practice, with too many crisps and chocolate bars finding their way into packed lunches.

Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is especially strong. They willingly and responsibly take on many tasks within school. The work of the school council is valued highly and members attend, and have an important input into, governors' meetings. Pupils also contribute extremely well to the wider community, for instance, by singing locally and by raising money to support a school in Tanzania. Four staff are to visit this school in the summer and curriculum work is already planned for next year using this visit as a stimulus. Pupils are prepared extremely well for their future, not only in their acquisition of basic skills, but also in the work ethic that they have gained. Many parents commented on this, one saying, 'Children leave as confident, forward-looking young people, who have had lots of opportunities.'

Children join the school with levels of skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected and make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. This good progress continues through the school and pupils achieve well. Progress accelerates in Years 3 to 6, and pupils

reach standards that are comfortably above average by the time they leave. Standards are particularly high in English, which has been a focus for the school. Almost all pupils reach the expected Level 2 by the end of Year 2 and the expected Level 4 by the end of Year 6 in all subjects. However, in mathematics in Year 2, not as many reach the higher Levels 2a and 3 as in reading or writing.

Pupils' good progress is due to good teaching. Teachers are particularly good at ensuring that their lessons are varied and stimulating and they use a good range of resources, particularly their interactive whiteboards, to keep the pupils' interest. Lessons are often a buzz of activity, particularly when teachers make good use of 'talk partners' so that pupils can gain understanding by discussing work with their neighbour. There are, however, occasions in lessons when pupils sit listening for too long when the more able have clearly already understood the task and could benefit from getting on. Teaching assistants are skilled and make a very good contribution to pupils' progress. They often work with groups of pupils who have been identified as needing extra help. The success of this work, and their work with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is evident in the very good progress that these pupils make. Further evidence of the success of the provision made is the very good progress made by pupils who do not speak English at home.

Academic guidance and support is good. There are very good systems for ensuring that no pupils fall behind. However, procedures to check the progress of different groups of pupils are not so thorough and are not linked clearly enough to the challenging targets that are set for pupils' annual progress. Teachers often mark pupils' work very effectively, giving them guidance on how they can improve. However, pupils are not sufficiently involved in assessing their own progress and do not have a clear notion of what they need to be aiming at next to improve their work.

One of a number of extremely positive parental comments summed up the school well when they said, 'The school provides a positive and caring environment in which children are encouraged to achieve their full potential and begin a journey into becoming well-rounded individuals.' Bearing in mind the progress being made and the total lack of complacency, the school is very well placed to make that final push to the summit.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle particularly quickly into the Nursery because all adults focus on their social and emotional needs in these early days. Home visits are an integral part of the settling process and it says much that children are soon keen to stay for longer and have lunch at school. There is a good range of activities planned for learning, both those led by an adult and those which children can choose for themselves. All of these are carefully aimed at each child's particular stage of development, and successes and things which children have found more difficult are recorded rigorously. The use of the outdoor area and visits is particularly good; the children clearly enjoyed the visit to Forest Schools and photographic evidence showed how much they gained from the trip.

These high levels of care and good planning continue into the Reception class. Teaching is good in both Nursery and Reception and the Foundation Stage is led well by an enthusiastic and committed manager. Although day-to-day assessment is very good, end-of-year assessments are not so accurate and do not give a clear picture of the progress children are making. For example, it appears to show that children's skills in calculation are weak, whereas they are at

least as good as one would expect. The school is well aware of this and good plans are in place to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are more involved in monitoring their own progress so that they clearly understand how they can improve their work.
- Ensure that the systems for tracking pupils' progress are clearly linked to the annual targets set for them and that these are updated regularly to provide managers with a clear picture of pupils' progress.

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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?	2
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Laurence C of E Primary School, Ludlow SY8 1TP

Thank you so much for welcoming me so warmly when I visited recently. I very much enjoyed talking to you and hearing all the wonderful things that you enjoy, particularly the trips and activities. Yours is a good school, so you are right to be proud of it.

These are some of the best things I found.

- All adults look after you exceptionally well and you are developing extremely well into responsible and caring young people.
- The range of things organised for your learning, including your lessons, the trips and visitors and all the activities, is absolutely super.
- You are making good progress and you reach comfortably above-average standards by the time you leave, particularly in English.
- You make a good start in the Nursery and Reception because adults there are very good at planning activities that help you settle in quickly and learn well.
- The reason for your good progress is that you are being taught well.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are extremely good at knowing what your school is doing well and they are continually making plans to improve it still further.

I have suggested that your headteacher and teachers might improve these things.

- You are not very clear about what you need to learn next and how well you are doing and I think you could be involved more in this process.
- The way the school keeps a check on your progress is not always very clear.

I know you will continue working hard and doing your best to help your headteacher and staff make the school even better.

With best wishes

John D Eadie Lead inspector