

St Lawrence VA CofE Lower School

Manor Lane, Wymington, Rushden, NN10 9LL

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Strong leadership and management from the headteacher and governors have led to considerable improvements in teaching and learning since the last inspection.
- The local authority has also played a key role in moving the school forward.
- Standards have risen and are above average at the end of Year 4.
- The pupils are making good progress. Many did particularly well last year in reading and writing.
- The teaching builds, at a good pace, on what pupils already know.
- Pupils behave well, and are well mannered and considerate towards each other.
- The youngest children get off to a good start because they benefit from a broad range of activities both outside and within the classroom.
- The headteacher and governors have well-developed plans to bring further improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not as many pupils make good progress in mathematics as they do in reading and writing
- Leaders in charge of subjects are not yet fully involved in checking how effective their actions to improve the school's performance have been.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited nine lessons and, in addition, observed the teaching of letters and sounds in all classes.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, teachers, the headteacher, representatives of the governing body, and a local authority officer.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents including the school improvement plan and policies about keeping pupils safe. He also examined the work in pupils' books.
- The views of 15 parents were analysed through the Parent View website. The inspector held a brief meeting with 14 parents who were attending a curriculum meeting in Year 2, to seek their views about the school.
- He also considered the views expressed in 18 questionnaires returned by school staff.

Inspection team

Christopher Parker, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools.
- Almost all of the pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided to the school, is smaller than in most schools.
- There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic groups than in most schools of this size.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at 'school action' is a little below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported at 'school action plus' or have a statement of special educational needs is much lower than the national average.
- The headteacher was appointed last year, following a period as acting headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils making good or better progress in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that pupils of all abilities are consistently engaged in activities that require them to think hard to find solutions
 - improving the marking of the pupils' work so that feedback helps them to move on at a rapid pace
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use, apply and extend their mathematical skills in a range of subjects and contexts.
- Deepen the middle leaders' understanding of the impact of the strategies to improve the school's performance, so that they can play a full role in driving improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards are rising. Attainment is above average by the end of Year 4. It is higher in reading and writing than in mathematics, as a result of a much sharper focus on improving the teaching of reading and writing over the last few years.
- Progress is good. A high proportion of pupils made better than expected progress in reading and writing last year. Almost all pupils made the progress expected of them in mathematics, although the proportion exceeding expectations was not as high as in English.
- Pupils do well across a range of subjects. The pupils write in a range of contexts. They are now developing their writing skills in different subjects, for example when they are learning about the past.
- Progress in reading is good. The school places a strong emphasis on daily lessons in which pupils improve their knowledge of the sounds that letters make. Frequent opportunities to read for a range of purposes increase their confidence and fluency.
- Pupils of all abilities do well in lessons. Teachers make sure that the tasks they set are based carefully on what pupils already know. In mathematics, the tasks set for some of the pupils are occasionally not taxing enough.
- The youngest children make good progress. They benefit from a wide range of activities, in both the classroom and the well-resourced outside area. A good mix of activities ensures that children are stimulated and interested by what they are doing.
- Resources are allocated thoughtfully. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive extra help and support make good progress. The teachers and the adults that help them use a range of prompts and apparatus to support their learning.
- Pupils supported by additional government funding did well last year. A range of approaches, such as one-to-one teaching, made sure that they made good progress. An evaluation of the use and impact of these funds has not yet been made available to parents.

The quality of teaching is good

- The teaching of reading and writing has improved since the last inspection. Training, both within the school and provided by the local authority, has generated greater consistency in the effectiveness of the teaching.
- Expectations are high. Teachers expect the pupils to behave well and persevere to complete the tasks they set for them. The very few pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour are well managed by the teachers and adults assigned to support them.
- Teachers plan tasks that build on what the pupils are already able to do. Pupils make progress at a good rate, because most tasks make them think hard. Occasionally, the work set in mathematics does not demand enough of pupils at differing ability levels.
- Teachers plan lessons in a series so that they can move learning along at a pace that maintains pupils' interest and enthusiasm. The older pupils say that they enjoy lessons, and that their teachers will always give them extra help if they need it.
- Reading is taught well. As a result of focused training, the teachers now confidently and

effectively promote the pupils' knowledge and use of the sounds that letters make. They provide interesting opportunities for pupils to read, both for enjoyment and to find information.

- Teachers use stories and poems well to encourage pupils to write. Before they begin to write, pupils talk to their teacher, and each other, about their ideas. Teachers create opportunities to write in many different contexts.
- Teachers prompt and question throughout lessons so that they can help and support any pupils who do not fully understand. Teachers work particularly well to probe and question more-able pupils in order to deepen their understanding.
- Detailed marking of pupils' writing helps them to improve. However, pupils do not get the same quality of feedback on their work in mathematics. Consequently, they are not as clear about what they need to learn next in mathematics as they are in English.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is strong. The team of adults works together very well. The children are encouraged to become independent, both in teacher-led activities and those they choose themselves.
- The range of activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage is broad and interesting. The adults provide good opportunities for children to write, count and play instruments, as well as for extending their physical and creative development.
- Classrooms are bright and welcoming. The very recent refurbishment of much of the building has heightened the pupils' appreciation of what the school offers them, both in lessons and after school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are very positive about the school. This is reflected in the level of their attendance, which is above average. Parents who responded to Parent View, and those who gave their views during the inspection, had no concerns about behaviour.
- The pupils are polite and well mannered. Lunchtimes are very social occasions where pupils hold conversations around the table with each other and the adults who supervise them. Social development is strongly promoted from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards.
- Adults who work with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage provide good models of correct behaviour and spoken responses. Good manners are strongly reinforced, and at a very early stage in their education the children listen attentively to adults and each other.
- Pupils behave well. They listen carefully to their teachers and contribute well to lessons. Pupils deal very sensibly with incidents where an individual pupil finds it difficult to manage their own behaviour, and most continue to concentrate on their work.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms bullying can take. In discussion, none of the pupils could recall any incident other than occasional instances of pupils falling out. None of the pupils was aware of any unkind name-calling.
- The school's intolerance of bullying is set out in its anti-bullying policy, which gives clear procedures to be followed in the event of bullying being reported. The policy sets out the school's approach to raising pupils' awareness of different types of bullying through lessons.
- The teachers take every opportunity to promote the positive response to a difficult situation.

The pupils are comfortable talking to the adults in school, who in turn listen carefully to their views. The Chair of the Governing Body now attends meetings of the school council.

- The pupils say they feel safe at school. Equality of opportunity and positive attitudes are strongly promoted. All of the parents who responded to Parent View said that their child is well looked after at school and feels safe.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, managers and governors have made marked improvements. They have established clear and high expectations. They are in a good position to move the school from strength to strength through well-thought-out and detailed improvement plans.
- Communication within the school is good. This has resulted in a team spirit that, along with training and support from the local authority, has brought about improvements in teaching, with the result that it is now good.
- The headteacher manages the performance of the teachers very effectively. Teachers are set clear targets linked to pupils' progress. Their skills and confidence are developed through well-focused training, and the quality of teaching is frequently monitored.
- The headteacher has focused sharply on improving literacy. With additional expertise and assistance from the local authority, the pupils' performance in reading and writing has improved considerably.
- Middle leaders are playing an increasing role in the school's improvement. However, they do not yet have a comprehensive overview of the impact of the changes and improvements made, so they are not yet able to play a full role in driving further improvement.
- Self-evaluation is thorough and detailed, and provides a realistic appraisal of how much the school has improved and the areas in which further improvements are needed. Members of the governing body frequently visit the school to check how well it is working.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - requires leaders and managers to explain and account for the pupils' performance
 - makes good use of its expertise to both support and monitor the work of the school
 - has a clear strategy to improve its own effectiveness and to improve the school further.
- The pupils are taught through a broad and interesting range of topics and themes. They have good opportunities to use and practise their reading and writing skills, but fewer opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills.
- The pupils have access to a broad range of activities beyond lessons. For example, they attend choir, drama club and cultural celebrations, and respond positively to charity events. Such activities contribute well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Links with parents have improved 'out of all recognition'. Parents are now pleased with the information they receive. Meetings for parents to find out about what their child is taught are now well established and well attended.
- The school meets most statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding. Some new requirements for websites came into force recently, and the school is aware that it has not yet updated its own website to cover all of them.

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	109628
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	405247

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Lewis
Headteacher	Gilly Donald
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2011
Telephone number	01933 353530
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