

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Halstead

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115133
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357705
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Katherine Beck

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Darren Burr
Headteacher	Damon Howlett
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Sixteen lessons taught by nine teachers were observed. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, staff, and representatives of the governing body and local authority. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the procedures for safeguarding pupils, the school's self-evaluation form and the school improvement plan. In addition, inspectors looked at the report from the school improvement partner, pupils' work, records of pupils' progress, attendance records and the views given on 112 parental questionnaires.

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

- The inspection team investigated the effectiveness of the action the school is taking to reverse the trend of underachievement, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- Inspectors investigated whether assessment is used effectively to plan work to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities.
- Improvements to the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is an average sized primary school. The majority of pupils come from the immediate locality and nearby villages. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. A low proportion come from minority ethnic groups and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, as well as the proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, is below that found in most schools nationally. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than usually found. Pupils' special educational needs relate to physical, communication, and moderate learning difficulties. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 some pupils are taught in mixed age classes. Most staff are long serving, but since the last inspection there has been a number of staff changes. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post for a less than eighteen months. Some staff are leading subjects and teaching year groups that are new to them. The school runs its own early morning club.

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?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

St Andrew's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Standards when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 have been broadly average for several years. The newly appointed headteacher, deputy headteacher, and the governing body, work closely as a team. Their main priority is to raise the expectations that staff have of the pupils and those that pupils have for themselves. The school's aims are 'to aim high, to enjoy learning and to care for each other.' They are underpinned by the core values of faith, love, honesty, respect, and determination. Many of the initiatives the school is working on are new and it is too soon to judge their full impact. That said, staff are working effectively with partners outside the school to overcome a legacy of significant underachievement in Years 3 to 6 and some decline in performance since the last inspection. One of the impacts of this has been that in 2010 teacher assessments at the end of Year 6 showed that standards in English had risen to well above average. The leadership team is fully aware of the strengths of the school and the areas for development and their priorities are appropriate. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Parents and carers have every confidence in the school and its leadership and management.

Pupils' good attitudes, behaviour and ability to listen attentively contribute to their attainment. New initiatives within the curriculum are designed to motivate pupils, especially boys and to develop their skills and knowledge across different curriculum subjects. Pupils' engagement is good and their attendance is above average. Their understanding of spiritual, moral and social issues is a particular strength and they make important contributions to the church and immediate community.

The teaching is satisfactory. Teachers generally choose material that is of interest and are clear in their instructions. Work is pitched at broadly the right level but staff are not always using assessment strategies to match work to needs or to challenge the more able. Few pupils have clear targets that tell them what they need to do to make faster progress and parents and carers are not fully aware of the progress their children are making. The range of teaching methods is limited. For example teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to use their initiative or work in teams. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have implemented procedures to improve the quality of teaching, holding teachers accountable for pupils' progress and attainment. Not all staff have found it easy to accept the required changes. While there are pockets of good teaching there is a very small amount of inadequate teaching that is being addressed. Consequently pupils' progress is uneven across the school.

Recent changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage give children many opportunities to learn through practical activities that take into account their age and interests. They also provide the chance to talk a great deal and learn to read and write. However, few

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activities involve challenges that enable children to be creative and think critically. There are too few opportunities to sit quietly to read and enhance their developing reading skills.

Many members of the governing body are new to their role. They have undergone training and begun monitoring the work of the school, but they are not yet challenging senior staff robustly about its overall performance. Some staff are new to their subject leadership roles. They are at an early stage of developing skills to monitor and evaluate the impact of provision on the outcomes for pupils.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By April 2012 raise the quality of teaching so that most of the lessons are good. In particular ensure that all staff:
 - employ a variety of teaching strategies, including those that promote opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and work in teams
 - use assessment effectively to plan work that matches the needs of pupils of all abilities
 - involve pupils in setting individual challenging targets that are also shared with their parents and carers.
- Raise the quality of leadership and management to good by:
 - enabling the governing body to challenge and support the school with greater rigour
 - increasing the skills of subject leaders so that they contribute fully to the systems for monitoring provision and outcomes for pupils.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, improve the provision by:
 - providing more well-planned, purposeful and challenging play activities that enable children to be creative and think critically
 - making space for children to sit quietly and comfortably to enjoy reading or sharing a book.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils start school with a very wide range of abilities and the number with a statement of special educational needs is increasing. Overall pupils' achievements are satisfactory, but there are signs of better progress for some pupils in English as a result of good teaching. Teaching assistants, together with a part-time special educational needs coordinator, are having a positive impact on the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers have responsibility for setting targets for those with individual education plans. These targets lack a sharp focus on what pupils need to do and learn. This sometime makes it difficult to match work precisely to needs and track progress. Records show that some pupils with significant learning needs are making good progress from their starting points, but for most pupils with special educational needs their progress is no better than satisfactory.

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Pupils enjoy school, especially the sporting activities that also enable them to excel in competitions out of school. In lessons pupils' apply themselves well. In a good lesson in Year 2, designed specifically to attract the interest of a high number of boys, pupils were keen to take it in turns to read the story of 'Jason and the Golden Fleece.' They listened carefully and they were able to answer purposeful questions about what might happen or the reasons for events taking place in the story. This helped pupils to gain confidence in their reading and comprehension skills as well as think up good ideas for their own story. This good teaching is not consistent throughout the school. Pupils often complete worksheets that limit their initiative and opportunities to solve problems as a group. This hinders the development of their future workplace skills.

Pupils are confident that they are safe in school, but procedures to ensure this is always the case have only recently been implemented. Older pupils enjoy their responsibilities as 'buddies' to the youngest pupils and are certain that any worries they have will be sorted out. They have very limited involvement in making decisions about how they would like to improve the school. Pupils know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, selecting healthy meals at lunchtime and participating in a wide range of sports. Pupils' awareness of the diversity of life globally is enhanced by writing to their pen pals in France and developing links with China. They are less aware of the diversity of faiths and cultures nationally.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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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How effective is the provision?

The satisfactory teaching builds pupils' knowledge and understanding year-on-year. Staff make clear what pupils are to learn and give specific guidance on how they are to complete the work they have been set. They collaborate closely with teaching assistants who often work with pupils with special educational needs in small groups. Strategies based on recent training to help children record their thoughts quickly on whiteboards are being implemented. However, in some classes these ideas are not always reviewed by staff to check if pupils have understood fully or to correct misconceptions before the board is wiped clean. This limits staff awareness of how well some pupils are progressing.

Teachers' approaches to planning, the use of time, assessment, target setting and marking, are inconsistent. This results in a lack of challenge in some of the work, especially for the more able. Some pupils know their targets well and are clear about what they are to do to improve, but this is not always the case. Senior staff are developing a teaching and learning policy to bring about greater consistency and raise the quality of teaching, thereby enabling pupils to progress at a faster rate.

The implementation of a curriculum with cross-curricular links is making learning more relevant and meaningful. Where this has been implemented well pupils are completing work to a higher standard. Recent work on the Ancient Egyptians in Year 5 reflects pupils' good knowledge and application of literacy skills. Nonetheless, not all staff are using the curriculum to provide pupils with opportunities to be independent, use their initiative, or work together. Sport, the chance to learn French, and a broad range of extra-curricular activities that many pupils attend are important strengths. There are few visits out or visitors to the school to make learning come alive for the pupils.

Good pastoral care means pupils' personal needs are taken fully into account and this is valued by parents and carers. Close partnerships with other professionals are proving beneficial in helping pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to overcome their problems. The early morning club supports parents, carers and pupils who need to make an early start to the day and underpins the high level of punctuality.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have high expectations of staff and pupils. Their strong commitment to bring improvement across all the outcomes for pupils has resulted in a concise development plan. This includes clear, accurate and challenging priorities for improvement. To enable staff to work as a team this document has been subject to

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consultation and taken time to implement. Strategies to monitor and raise the quality of teaching have been introduced. Procedures to evaluate these changes and those set out in the action plan are not yet robust enough to ensure pupils gain full benefit from them.

Members of the governing body are fully supportive of the school and determined to improve its performance. Policies and procedures with regard to safeguarding have recently been reviewed and a single central record of the suitability of those involved in the school to work with children unsupervised has been established. Consequently, pupils and parents and carers are confident about their safety.

The school has a clear analysis of the groups of pupils it serves and their performance. It satisfactorily promotes equality. All pupils are included in what the school has to offer. Aspects of community cohesion are promoted well through the school's links with the church and growing links with France and China. The school is aware that it provides limited opportunities for pupils to develop contacts with schools nationally to enhance their understanding of life in a multi-cultural society.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Senior leaders have taken rapid and appropriate action since the beginning of the school year to improve provision. While staff are inexperienced, they are enthusiastic about working with children of this age and are attending training. The Reception classroom has been reorganised to give more space to play and new resources purchased to promote curiosity. An appropriate assessment system has been introduced to enable staff to track children's progress and plan the next steps in their learning. The introduction of home visits enabled children to settle well into school and has strengthened the partnership with parents and carers. Children in both the single and mixed age class make satisfactory progress overall, but with strengths in their personal development.

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Warm and trusting relationships between the children and the adults mean there is a happy atmosphere and children play and learn with confidence. Good behaviour allows adults to work with small groups uninterrupted. Children really enjoy engaging with adults when trying to solve problems such as building a strong wall with bricks, or a see-saw from recyclable materials, but problem-solving activities such as these are limited.

Children are rightly encouraged to be active in their learning. Outside they enjoy riding on wheeled toys, having fun on rocking toys as well as climbing, balancing and sliding on a climbing frame. Indoors, there are opportunities to engage in role-play, cook, paint or play together making a road or rail track. A focus on developing children's speech and language is helping to enhance their communication skills, but there is no space for children to relax, sit quietly or to enjoy browsing through books.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire is higher than usually found. The very large majority of those responding are fully supportive of the school and its leadership and management. All responses agreed that they were happy with the school, that the school keeps their children safe and that it promotes the adoption of healthy lifestyles successfully. In their written comments parents and carers praise the changes made by the headteacher since his appointment, the way the school has helped their children to settle and become confident, specialist sports provision, and the manner in which parents and carers of children with special educational needs are supported. A very small minority are concerned about the way behaviour is dealt with and how the school takes account of their views. They would like more information about their child's progress. The inspection found behaviour to be good. In recent months the school has responded to parental views with regard to the car park and the provision of healthier lunches. Senior staff and governors are currently reviewing ways to give parents and carers more information about their child's progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Halstead 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 112 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 241 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	73	65	38	34	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	77	69	35	31	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	42	38	66	59	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	43	59	53	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	50	45	61	54	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	40	64	57	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	54	49	44	0	0	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)	44	39	59	53	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	42	62	55	0	0	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	46	50	45	7	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	36	64	57	6	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	62	55	48	43	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	55	50	45	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	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.



16 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Halstead, Halstead, CO9 2BH

I am sure you remember that I visited your school with two other inspectors recently. Thank you for being helpful and for answering all our questions. You told us that you are happy at the school. Your parents and carers said they are very pleased that you come to St Andrews. At the moment St Andrews is a satisfactory school, but the grown-ups are keen to make it a good or an outstanding one. You behave well, know how to keep yourselves fit and healthy, and are very good at attending regularly. All the staff take good care of you and you are confident that a grown-up will listen to any worries that you have and keep you safe.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do quite a lot of things. You can help by keeping to your school aim, to 'Aim high', by trying to achieve more than you think you can. To help you do this we have asked the teachers to make more of your lessons good ones and give you challenging work and the chance to be enterprising and work as a team. You all need to know what you must do to improve and share your targets with your parents and carers. We have said that the governing body should ask your headteacher questions to check that you are making the best possible progress and, if not, how they can help. We would like the teachers who are responsible for subjects to help your headteacher and deputy headteacher check that new ways, introduced to help you learn, are working.

You know that there have been changes to the arrangements for the children in the Reception class. They are enjoying the space they have to play in. We have asked the headteacher and deputy headteacher to ensure that the children in the Reception Year have more chances to be creative in their play and to think how to solve challenging problems. Young children are often very busy playing and at the moment there is nowhere to have a rest and look at books, so we have said this should be provided.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Beck

Lead inspector

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