

St Aldhelm's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123753
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	359507
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Laurie Lewin

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	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Blaker
Headteacher	Joy Mounter
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty-four lessons were observed and eight teachers were seen. The inspectors met with pupils, staff, parents and carers, and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and scrutinised samples of pupils' work. The inspectors analysed 95 questionnaires from parents and carers, 20 from staff and 89 from pupils.

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

- What does the school's assessment information show about the current progress of pupils?
- How well are pupils currently progressing with improving their writing skills, and their calculation skills in mathematics?
- How successful are staff in providing work to challenge the more-able pupils?
- How sharply are targets defined to help pupils know how to improve their work?

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than others of the same type. It serves the local village and surrounding area. The overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average when compared to other schools, but above average in the older classes. The school provides support for a number of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Nearly all of the pupils are White British, with a very small number coming from other ethnic heritages. Pupils in the school are currently taught in seven classes. The school is accredited with several awards including the Healthy Schools Plus Award and the International Schools 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

This is a good school. It has improved significantly since its last inspection. Staff are very good at helping all pupils become confident and enthusiastic learners.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with good teaching that ensures they achieve well. The good teaching and good progress in learning are sustained throughout the school so that by the time pupils reach the end of Year 6 they attain above average levels. All groups of pupils achieve well, including more-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. ♦ Good relationships between all staff and the pupils ensure that all individuals feel fully encouraged and supported. Staff are very alert to any pupils at risk of falling behind and are quick to implement extra support for these individuals as required. All pupils are provided with clear targets to help them improve. While pupils do well overall in English, attainment in writing is not as good as in reading. The provision of a top-quality curriculum has been at the heart of the pupils' rapidly improving achievement. The wide range of practical and problem-solving activities, extensive range of trips and visitors, and the strong focus on ensuring that pupils become active learners who play an influential part in curriculum development all go towards making school a dynamic and exciting place for the pupils to be. Excellent care, guidance and support provision ensures that all pupils have a high level of trust in and regard for staff. A typical comment from pupils spoken to was, 'Teachers and adults here are pretty much like your friends. They always help you.'

Pupils' excellent behaviour is reflected in the thoughtful, friendly, mature and responsible attitudes they develop. For example, during a shared reading session, Year 6 pupils were seen to be taking great pride in helping Reception children develop their skills. Through the strong emphasis within the curriculum, the drive towards gaining the Healthy Schools Plus Award and Activemark, pupils have gained an excellent understanding about how to keep themselves safe and maintain healthy lifestyles. At lunchtimes and break times, they eat healthy food. Pupils participate in lots of sports activities. They have a clear awareness of right and wrong, and through the way in which they work and play, they gain an excellent sense of social awareness. In working towards gaining the International Award and their links with and school trip to Germany, pupils have learned to reach out and engage with communities further afield. Much is also achieved within the immediate community. For example, the school council meeting with the school's governing body ensures pupils have a clear voice in supporting the school's development. ♦

The headteacher is highly effective in bringing innovative practice to the school and inspiring staff with a strong desire to drive the school towards becoming outstanding. She has involved senior leaders and the governing body in rigorous training so that that they have a good ability to gauge how well the school is performing. However, foundation

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subject leaders have yet to receive such training and their skills in monitoring and evaluation are underdeveloped. No stones are left unturned in the search for accelerating improvement. Very rigorous and accurate self-evaluation ensures that priorities for actions in the school development plan are very clear. The final title in this plan, 'Reach For The Stars', very much encapsulates the ethos within a school that has come a long way since its previous inspection. The school has a good capacity to maintain its current momentum of improvement. Given the current achievement of pupils, it provides good value for money.

The governing body fulfils all of its statutory responsibilities and involves itself strongly in all aspects of the school's work. Parents and carers are kept well informed. They also participate strongly in helping the school through, for example, their very active Parent Teacher Association.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' writing by July 2012 through:
 - improving the accuracy of pupils' spelling
 - ensuring pupils learn to use a wide range of vocabulary in their written work.
- Develop the roles of foundation subject coordinators by July 2012 through:
 - providing them with the necessary training to improve their skills in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and pupils' attainment and progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children's skills and understanding are below the expected levels when they start school. They progress well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This good progress continues across the school for all groups of pupils including the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils show a good ability to read and articulate their ideas. Much good-quality writing was seen produced by Year 6 pupils, enlivened by an imaginative and interesting use of vocabulary. However, occasionally across the school, pupils' written work does not reflect the breadth of language they display in talking about their ideas, and they occasionally stumble in writing ideas down due to spelling difficulties. Pupils become confident in calculating and using and applying their mathematical skills in practical and problem-solving situations, as was seen in a Year 4 lesson where pupils worked to construct a challenging mathematical board game. Pupils take much pride in their work and are keen to achieve well. This is reflected in the good-quality presentation in their books and the glow of pride projected by the many individuals collecting awards during assembly for their good work and efforts. Pupils respond well to the strong expectation set that they always actively involve themselves in what is being learned. As a result, they become good at asking questions and interacting confidently with each other and adults. This kind of approach, along with the good levels achieved in their work, ensures pupils acquire good skills to help them succeed in the future. Pupils fully enjoy all aspects of school life and, as a result, their attendance is good. Their excellent behaviour strongly supports their ability to work hard and concentrate during all lessons.

Pupils feel extremely safe at school and their participation in identifying potential risks heightens this awareness. They are all fully confident to seek help or advice. Comments

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from pupils spoken to included, 'School is like my second home ♦ it's a happy and friendly place to be where everyone helps you.' Pupils are very proud of their school. They conscientiously carry out the many responsibilities given to them. Through their very busy school council, all pupils have a voice and a chance to influence the school's development. Activities such as charity fund-raising, hosting lunch for senior citizens in school, and working extensively with link schools overseas are just a few examples of the very wide-ranging involvement of pupils in contributing to the community. These activities also ensure pupils engage with and learn a lot about people from a wide range of different cultural backgrounds at the same time as gaining a sensitive awareness of the world around them.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are very rigorous in planning their work to ensure that all activities match pupils' needs precisely. The planning is based on good use of all assessment information and this ensures that pupils of all ability groups, including the more able, are well challenged by the work provided. Teachers expect pupils to be fully active and engaged in lessons and orchestrate activities well to ensure this happens. For example, outstanding teaching in Years 4 and 6 showed pupils conscientiously evaluating each other's work to see if it met the success criteria for the lessons. This impacted strongly on helping pupils understand how to refine and improve their efforts. Teachers provide very clear explanations in all

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lessons and make good use of all resources, such as the interactive whiteboards, to enliven their presentations. Basic skills are usually well taught. However, occasionally, chances for pupils to improve the accuracy of their spelling are not sufficiently well organised. Also, occasionally, not enough emphasis is placed on pupils using a wide range of vocabulary in their writing. Teaching assistants work very well across the school supporting teachers and groups of pupils and individuals. The excellent curriculum provision ensures that the content of all lessons is lively and interesting and wherever possible based on 'real life' practical problem-solving activities. A good example of this approach was seen in a challenge set for older pupils to design and build a chair. Excellent opportunities for pupils to occasionally move classes to work with different teachers are used impressively to link areas of the curriculum across the school. For example, a lesson for Year 6 about farming in the developing world not only gave pupils an extensive knowledge about 'fair trade' issues, but also linked the work closely to the achievement of their targets set for English. The curriculum provides exceptionally well for boosting pupils' personal development. It provides a strong emphasis on pupils developing a responsibility for their learning and actively engaging with a wide range of people both within and outside the immediate school community. This approach successfully engages pupils' motivation and helps them to become responsible citizens of the future. Staff care for all of the pupils extremely well, are rigorous about all matters concerning safeguarding, and proactive in seeking innovative ways to strengthen support provision. For example, the establishment of a focus group for parents and carers has very successfully reinforced the provision for supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and, in particular, has strengthened support and information for the parents and carers concerned. ♦

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has established rigorous systems for evaluating the school's performance and to ensure areas of weakness are thoroughly addressed. Good quality assessment systems are used well to track pupils' progress carefully. With the establishment of a strong staff team over the last two years, the pace of improvement has become rapid. The new-found vibrancy and dynamism of the school is well recognised by the parents and carers, many of whom commented on how pleased they are with the improvements that have occurred. Members of the senior leadership team work very well together and provide strong support for staff throughout the school. However, the roles of foundation subject coordinators are not yet fully developed in order to give them an accurate overview of the quality of provision in the subjects for which they are responsible.

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Through full involvement in training, the governing body has significantly strengthened its working practices. Good systems are in place to enable it to monitor the school's performance. Good levels of support and challenge are provided for the headteacher and staff. Safeguarding processes are very well embedded within the curriculum so that pupils gain an excellent understanding about how to keep themselves safe. High priority is given to ensuring that all policies, such as those relating to child protection, are up-to-date and fully implemented. Procedures for assessing risks are strong, with follow-up actions applied swiftly where required. The school works well to ensure that an extensive range of opportunities is open to all individuals and that no discrimination occurs.

The school ensures that parents and carers get lots of help in supporting their children's learning and regular information about how their children are progressing. The school has strong links with other local schools and a range of partner organisations, and uses these well to boost pupils' learning.

Community cohesion is well promoted with a wide range of activities constantly planned to put the school's work at the heart of the local community and to link it with a good range of organisations further afield. The impact of all actions taken is regularly reviewed to help inform future plans.

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

Good induction processes and good teaching ensure that children settle quickly when they start school. They progress well so that they achieve average attainment by the time they are ready to start Year 1. Children's behaviour is excellent and they develop very confidently. Much enjoyment is evident in all activities. For example, during a snack break time, children socialised happily with much lively conversation and laughter. They are mature for their age and show much consideration for one another. They make a lot of

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gains in this respect through working with the excellent Year 6 role models during joint reading sessions. Children learn to listen attentively and concentrate well, as was noted during a good lesson where they worked together, discussing ideas with a partner learning the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. The curriculum is very well designed to provide an interesting and rich range of practical activities. Staff set up a good range of outdoor activities. However, children do not always get enough chances to access these activities in rainy weather as there is no fully waterproof sheltered outdoor area. The teacher and the teaching assistants work together as a highly efficient team and ensure that all children feel valued and fully encouraged. As a result of good teaching, children rapidly build up their basic skills. For example, they gain a secure grasp of letter sounds and number work, and show confidence in articulating their ideas. The provision in this part of the school is well led and managed, with accurate self-evaluation established along with good quality plans to maintain the momentum of improvement. The care, support and guidance of all individuals are excellent so that children feel completely safe and well cared for at all times. Staff are vigilant in all matters connected with safeguarding. They know the children very well and support their individual needs strongly. They track the progress of all individuals very carefully and provide strong support for any individuals with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

There was a high return of questionnaires. Parents and carers are pleased with the school's work and particularly with the way in which it has improved in recent times. Positive comments included, 'The school is fantastic and our son's confidence has grown since being here' and, 'We have had children at the school for many years and cannot praise the headteacher highly enough for the improvements brought about in recent times.' These views were typical of many others received. Very few parents and carers had any critical views about the school and these views were not endorsed by findings during this inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Aldhelm's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary 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 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 177 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	68	29	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	64	33	35	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	45	48	51	3	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	43	51	54	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	57	40	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	47	48	51	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	53	44	46	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)	43	45	45	47	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	48	48	51	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	46	47	49	1	1	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	45	44	46	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	57	60	36	68	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	61	36	38	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.



21 March 2011



Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Aldhelm's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Shepton Mallet BA4 4PL



Thank you for making us feel welcome at your school. We have judged that yours is a good school. Through discussions we had with you and the survey that some of you completed, we know that there are many things that you like about your school.



Here are some of the good things that we found in your school.

- You make a good start to school in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- We can see that you enjoy school a lot and the excellent curriculum makes sure you get lots of interesting activities to take part in.
- You are very fit and healthy and know a lot about how to stay this way.
- Good teaching helps you to make good progress and your teachers work very hard to make your lessons interesting and fun.
- Your behaviour is excellent. You are thoughtful and good at helping others.
- You all have an excellent understanding about how to work and play safely. The adults in the school do an outstanding job of taking care of you.
- The headteacher, staff and the governing body have done a good job of helping the school improve. They work very hard to make sure it keeps improving.



This is what we have asked the school to do now.

- Help you to improve your writing by boosting your skills with spelling and getting you to use a wider range of interesting words in pieces of writing.
- Help teachers in charge of subjects such as history, geography, music, design and technology, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education to develop their skills in managing these areas.



You can all play an important part in helping the school to improve by continuing to work hard in all lessons.



Yours sincerely

Laurie Lewin

Lead inspector

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