

Aldbury Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117382
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379407
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Thomas-Pounce

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Kent
Headteacher	Kathryn Little
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed eight lessons or part-lessons taught by three different teachers, including three joint observations with the headteacher. A number of shorter observations of intervention sessions were also conducted. The inspector spoke formally with one group of pupils and informally with others during work and play. Meetings were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority officer, the headteacher and leaders with responsibility for English and mathematics. The inspector visited an assembly, listened to children read and discussed the work they have been doing in class. The work of the school was observed and a range of documentation looked at, including that related to school improvement planning, safeguarding children, the recording of pupils' progress, pupils' work and the school's self-evaluation procedures. The inspector also scrutinised the 57 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by pupils and staff. The inspector took account of the 18 returns of the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and no pupil is at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs varies from year to year but is above that found nationally. The proportion of pupils being supported at School Action Plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average. An increasing number of pupils enter and leave the school at different times in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The school meets the current government floor standards, which determine the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

A new headteacher took up post in September 2011. Prior to this, the school was led by an interim headteacher appointed by the local authority for several terms. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. The school has achieved National Healthy Schools status and a number of external awards including the School Sports Activemark.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is improving quickly and securely through the decisive action taken by the headteacher. Robust systems for monitoring the school's performance and effective professional development have led to improved teaching quality, improving attainment and better progress for all pupils in lessons.
- Children start school with skills and abilities that are in line with those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach broadly average levels of attainment. This represents satisfactory progress overall. However, as a direct result of the school's focused work, an increasing proportion of pupils make good progress which is leading to increased levels of attainment across the school. The school is not good overall because, despite the effective action taken, the increasingly good achievement has yet to be sustained.
- Under the effective leadership of the new headteacher, many changes have been made. The good curriculum provides memorable experiences. Pupils' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Attendance is above average.
- A large majority of teaching observed was good. However, over time its impact on pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Although teachers are increasingly skilled at making assessments of pupils' learning, pupils do not have enough time to act on improvement advice and activities do not always match the wide range of needs. Opportunities for independent learning are insufficient.
- Senior leaders and managers, including the governing body, are maintaining a clear focus to ensure that improvements continue. Effective assessment systems ensure that staff are held to account for pupils' progress. Those with subject leadership roles are not given enough opportunity to monitor and evaluate their subjects.

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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?

- Ensure teaching is consistently good to boost achievement further and raise attainment by:
 - ensuring that all activities are adapted to match the age, ability and needs of pupils
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to work independently and make choices about the content or structure of their work
 - ensuring that marking consistently identifies the most important features to improve and pupils have time to carry out the advice.
- Enable leaders at all levels to develop the skills necessary to monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility and thereby improve the quality of pupils' learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start in Reception with a range of skills, generally around those typically found for their age. Good induction procedures help the children to settle quickly. Children play together well and are well behaved. They make satisfactory progress and typically enter Year 1 at the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning.

Since the previous inspection, progress across the school from Reception to the end of Year 6 has not been consistent. Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics, while broadly average overall, has been variable. This reflects satisfactory achievement given pupils' starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The decisive action of the new headteacher and the concerted efforts of all staff to improve pupils' achievement through better teaching are now accelerating progress, and pupils' attainment is rising quickly and securely.

Boys' attainment in mathematics, a relative area of underperformance, is now improving steadily. This is because of the strong focus the school has given to teaching mathematical skills, which includes a progressive, whole-school approach to both mental and written calculation strategies. Pupils' attainment in reading by Year 2 and Year 6 is typically that expected for their age. The careful grouping of pupils for more systematic teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is leading to more targeted teaching. The inspector observed pupils making good progress as they linked the new sounds they were learning to spelling and writing, and then thinking of other words which used the same sound and spelling. Pupils joining the school are monitored very carefully and effective support is provided.

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The innovative curriculum promotes key skills well as pupils develop their talents and interests. As a result of recent changes to the curriculum and a focus on the teaching of writing, all pupils are increasingly writing accurately and convincingly. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well and make satisfactory and improving progress across all aspects of their work so that their attainment is rising quickly. This is due to the detailed analysis of their specific needs, the careful tracking of their achievements and the development of learning opportunities that appeal to their interests. Above-average attendance and improving information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy skills mean that pupils are better prepared for their future learning. While most parents and carers believe that their children make good progress, inspection evidence indicates that it is currently satisfactory, although it is improving strongly.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers agreed that their children are well taught and this is what the inspector saw in most lessons observed, although the impact of teaching over time is no more than satisfactory. When teaching is occasionally satisfactory, the challenge and pace of learning is slower, tasks are not matched well enough to pupils' needs and interests, and too much time is spent on the same assignment. This restricts the time pupils are actively learning by limiting the opportunity for pupils to work independently and make choices over the content or structure of their work.

Pupils are familiar with the levels at which they are working, and marking of pupils' work is regular and supportive. However, it does not always identify the most important features to improve and some pupils are not always given enough time to respond to their teachers' comments. Relationships in all classes seen were positive, resulting in pupils who confidently ask and answer questions. Teachers are good at sharing with pupils exactly what they are expected to do in lessons. They use good questioning techniques to challenge pupils and these help them make sense of their learning. The willingness and the skills necessary to work together are strong features of pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are many planned opportunities to enable pupils to use their imagination and develop their creative-writing skills across the curriculum.

Following changes to the curriculum, the school is making writing more purposeful and interesting to pupils. For example, this term, the 'Shrek Wow Day' inspired pupils to create information texts about swamp creatures and to write about the shelters they created in the school grounds. The younger pupils excitedly made a castle with a dragon's den. This provided a rich source of stimulation, which resulted in pupils enjoying and understanding their learning more. Learning support assistants work well with teachers and provide good proactive support so that all pupils have full access to the good range of learning opportunities provided. Extensive partnerships have resulted in a curriculum that provides excellent enrichment for pupils, supports their understanding of healthy living and extends their experiences. There is also

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provision for modern foreign languages and instrumental tuition. Visits are used extremely well to support pupils' learning. High-quality professional development and the commitment of all staff to improve their practice are now leading to a greater proportion of teaching that is good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite and courteous and their good and sometimes exemplary behaviour, especially of older pupils, helps create a positive climate for learning. A very large majority of parents and carers agree. Nearly all pupils are attentive and respond quickly to changes of activity, enabling time to be used well in lessons. Pupils reported that the school's approach – to listen to any concerns raised and respond promptly and appropriately – results in very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour or bullying in any form. The school's records show this to be the case over time. Pupils demonstrate consideration for others and respect for difference, and this underpins their thoughtful attitudes about the diverse cultures in the world around them. Pupils show a good sense of how to stay safe, recognise danger and consider risk. This enables them to feel safe and secure. Pupils have a keen understanding of right and wrong and of their rights and responsibilities within the community. They talk of the importance of helping others and enjoy their time in school. Pupils thrive on the responsibilities given to them, for example, acting as a playground buddy. The school council takes much pride in its positive contributions to school improvement, such as the development of the new 'Wildwood Den', which has greatly improved the quality of outdoor play. The school promotes good attendance and punctuality very well.

Leadership and management

Following the last inspection, the school experienced a prolonged period of instability. Disruptions to teaching left a legacy of underachievement that the school is successfully remedying. Drawing on the good partnership with the local authority established over the last two years, those leading the school have taken decisive action to tackle underperformance. They have established a culture of improvement within the school and raised the expectations of staff about what pupils can achieve. Appropriate and effective professional development has enhanced teachers' involvement and confidence in tracking pupils' achievement. The impact of the new headteacher can be seen in the rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures in place. These include regular observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and close analysis of assessment data. Roles and responsibilities of subject leaders have been reallocated. Staff are now starting to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating subject areas, but have not had enough opportunity to put these into practice.

Self-evaluation is accurate and the governing body welcomes the information, which allows it to hold the school to account. Over the last two years, governors with proven expertise joined the governing body and this has enabled them to steer the school forward. The governing body carries out all its statutory responsibilities; this includes overseeing the procedures for safeguarding, which follow recommended

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good practice in all respects.

This is a school where children are warmly welcomed and valued. The curriculum is good overall. Strengths lie in the range of enrichment activities that are provided to develop pupils' sporting, musical and artistic talents, which promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively so that gaps in attainment between boys and girls and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and their peers are closing quickly and securely. Determined leadership and management have restored the school to a satisfactory and rapidly improving level of performance.

The headteacher is a resourceful and ambitious leader who is successfully bringing about steady improvements. Pupils' progress is rising and the quality of teaching is improving. The good engagement of parents and carers coupled with strong links with the church and local community ensure they can play an active part in school improvement. Improved attendance is increasing pupils' chances of success. There is clear evidence of the school's capacity to improve further.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



26 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aldbury Church of England Primary School, Tring, HP23 5RT

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently. I very much enjoyed meeting you and particularly appreciate how helpful you were when you spoke with me, shared your work or explained what you were learning during lessons. The presentation from members of the school council was very helpful.

You go to a satisfactory school. This means that there are some things that your school does well and others that need improvement. You told me that you feel very safe and enjoy coming to school. Your teachers are always trying to make your learning fun by thinking of more exciting ways to help you develop your reading, writing and mathematics skills. This is helping you to make even better progress in your learning.

All of the adults who work with your headteacher are determined to make sure that your school keeps getting better and better. To help your school to do this, I have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do the following things:

- make sure every lesson always leads to good progress by helping you to participate more in your lessons so you can learn more independently
- give you lots of advice about your work so you know exactly what you have to do to make it even better
- share the leadership and management of the school more widely with members of staff so they develop the skills they need to improve your learning.

You can help your school to improve further by continuing to work hard for your teachers so that you all achieve the very best that you can.

Yours sincerely

Susan Thomas-Pounce
Lead inspector

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