

St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109595
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	363753
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	366
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Dilley
Headteacher	Sue Rolfe
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2007
School address	Brunts Lane Biggleswade SG18 0LY
Telephone number	01767 312311
Fax number	01767 600531
Email address	standrews@cbc.beds.sch.uk

Age group	4–9
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2011
Inspection number	363753

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 19 lessons or part lessons taught by 14 different teachers. The inspection team examined the school's policies, assessment information, pupils' work, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. They held discussions with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and pupils. The inspectors analysed 141 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and others by pupils and staff.

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

- The progress of boys in writing.
- How well teachers use assessment information to match tasks carefully to pupils' different abilities.
- The effectiveness of the specially resourced provision and how well the pupils with speech and language needs progress.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies to raise pupils' attendance.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well above average because the school has specially resourced provision for pupils with speech and language needs. Pupils in the specially resourced provision come from the school's normal catchment area and further afield. The provision is managed by the school and overseen by the local authority. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.

The school has a number of awards including the Activemark, Artsmark and Healthy School status. It has gained the Every Child Matters standard very recently.

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. The headteacher and staff have maintained and built upon the strengths identified in the last inspection and there are now some outstanding elements. Outstanding care, guidance and support make a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development. Their exceptionally good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their consideration and support for others. Pupils feel extremely safe because of the first-rate attention given to safeguarding. They enjoy school very much and show positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils adopt a healthy lifestyle by choosing healthy food and participating in regular exercise and sporting activities. They make valuable contributions to the school and the wider community. Much has been done to raise attendance, which is now above average.

Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and an interesting curriculum. Good-quality provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children do well. The children's good progress continues in Key Stages 1 and 2 and attainment by the end of Year 4 is above national expectations. Strategies to improve boys' writing have been implemented successfully. The specially resourced provision for pupils with speech and language needs is effectively managed and the pupils are integrated into mainstream classes very well. The good provision and the strong input from specialists enable those pupils to make good progress.

Teachers create attractive and positive environments for learning in their classrooms. Their explanations, instructions and questioning promote learning well. Assessment is usually used well to plan teaching and to match tasks to pupils' abilities. Pupils have good opportunities to assess and review their own learning. Occasionally, learning slows, with over-long introductions, whilst pupils are eager to tackle the main tasks. Opportunities are sometimes missed to extend the most-able pupils and to enable pupils to apply their skills and learn independently. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of additional activities.

The experienced headteacher provides good leadership and educational direction and is supported well by other senior and key leaders. A productive partnership has been established with parents and carers, who are pleased with the care and education provided for their children. Very strong partnerships with other agencies promote pupils' learning and development. Through systematic self-evaluation, the school knows its strengths and takes effective steps to bring about improvements. Since the last inspection, care, guidance and support have improved from good to outstanding and this has had a positive impact on the outcomes for pupils. There have also been key improvements to attendance and boys' writing. The school demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning by ensuring that, in all lessons:
 - all activities proceed at a brisk pace
 - opportunities are consistently provided to challenge and extend the most-able pupils.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning and research skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills levels that are broadly at the levels expected for their age and make good progress across all the areas of learning. Throughout the school, pupils show enthusiasm for learning and enjoy the wide range of activities provided. They told the inspectors, 'We love the topic on space,' 'Decimals and fractions are challenging,' and 'Science is my favourite lesson.' Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, including those with speech and language needs, make good progress. Occasionally, the more-able are not challenged sufficiently in lessons. By Year 4, it is clear from lessons and pupils' work that attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening because of the well-planned opportunities for them to discuss their learning, in pairs or in groups. They enjoy the range of books available and make good progress in reading. Successful action has been taken to improve pupils' performance in writing, especially for the boys. For example, in Year 4, pupils wrote interesting descriptions of an outer-space setting after being inspired by visual stimuli and good examples from the teacher. Pupils used powerful adjectives, adverbs and similes to create an exciting atmosphere. Their writing was well organised. Handwriting was fluent, joined and neatly presented. Punctuation and spelling were mainly accurate. In mathematics, pupils make good progress because of effective teaching and interesting tasks which are matched well to their needs.

Pupils demonstrate positive personal qualities extremely well, such as cooperation, honesty, respect for others, responsibility and tolerance. In an assembly, they reflected on the importance of unity and working together in school, in families and in clubs. Pupils feel extremely well cared for at school and know that there are always adults they can turn to for help if needed. They make good contributions to the school and to the wider community. Those on the school council represent their fellow pupils well. Pupils raise funds for a range of appeals and charities to help those who are less fortunate than themselves. With good personal, literacy and numeracy skills, pupils are well prepared for their next school and later life.

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

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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	1

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?

Lessons, typically, have a clear purpose so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Questioning is used effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and to check their understanding of new work. Pupils' interest is sustained when activities take place at a good pace and are tailored closely to their abilities and needs and these features were present in most of the lessons observed. The use of visual stimuli and effective demonstrations by teachers promote pupils' writing skills well. Teaching assistants are well deployed and make good contributions to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional help with language. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve because they are set clear individual learning targets. The marking of pupils' work is effective. Good work is praised and constructive comments guide improvement.

The curriculum promotes good academic progress for pupils and contributes very well to their personal development. A range of strategies to improve writing have been implemented effectively, particularly for the boys, such as choosing topics which appeal to boys and providing opportunities to write in different subjects. The promotion of independent study and research skills is less well developed. Health education and the wide range of physical activities provided contribute well to pupils' healthy lifestyles. Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs thoroughly, including choir, dance, football, gardening and Maypole dancing. Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum and pupils' learning. For

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

example, a Year 4 residential to Lincoln provides exciting new outdoor experiences such as archery, climbing and problem-solving activities.

Extremely strong care, guidance and support lie at the heart of the school's ethos. Pupils, parents and carers appreciate the very well organised, safe and secure environment provided. Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with the good support they need. Pupils from the specially resourced provision are integrated into mainstream classes very effectively. They receive high-quality specialist support when required. The 'nurture room' and input from the family worker and other agencies help to ensure that pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties are provided for extremely well. In partnership with other agencies, the school is very successful in supporting pupils and their families who require additional help. As one happy parent commented, 'The support and care given has been brilliant.' Robust monitoring and promotion of attendance have led to considerable improvements.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff have successfully created a positive school atmosphere for pupils to learn and develop. Senior leaders, staff and the governing body are well focused on promoting good-quality provision and positive outcomes for pupils. The leadership and management of key areas such as the Early Years Foundation Stage, English, mathematics, special educational needs and the specially resourced provision are all effective. Leaders and managers are successfully engaged in monitoring performance and improving their areas of responsibility. There are good systems for monitoring and developing teaching and senior staff have clear plans to extend these in order to improve practice further.

The governing body shows a clear understanding of the school's strengths and improvement priorities. It is supportive and provides constructive challenge so as to hold the school to account. Safeguarding is given considerable attention. Highly effective policies and procedures protect and safeguard pupils. The monitoring and evaluation of the procedures are rigorous and thorough. All staff are well trained in the area of safeguarding. The school takes parents', carers' and pupils' views into account in refining its safeguarding procedures.

All groups of pupils have full access to the range of good-quality provision, resulting in good progress in their learning. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination is tackled very effectively. Community cohesion is promoted successfully. Partnerships with

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

the parents and carers and the local community are good. The curriculum promotes pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths effectively. The school has clear plans to further extend pupils' understanding of life in the wider global community.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
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

Strong leadership and effective planning are promoting good provision and good outcomes for children. Children settle quickly into the setting because of good induction arrangements and their very positive relationships with the adults. They make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the considerable attention adults give to their care and welfare. Children grow in confidence, relate positively to others and behave very well.

The staff of the three Reception classes plan together effectively and provide interesting activities around themes such as Africa, Castles, Australia and Dinosaurs. Children are well taught and they enjoy the wide range of indoor and outdoor activities provided thoroughly. Staff assess children's performance well and keep effective records of their individual development and progress. Assessment is used effectively to plan learning to meet children's individual needs. There is a good blend of adult-led activities and others chosen by the children. Children have, therefore, good opportunities to explore, be creative and work independently. The setting places much emphasis on developing children's language skills and so they make good progress in speaking and listening. Children enjoy books and make good gains in acquiring and practising early writing skills. They have good opportunities to explore with colour. They painted impressive African sunsets of red, yellow and orange. Using a black pen silhouette, animals were added to the scene. The use of information and communication and technology (ICT) is limited currently, but there are clear plans to improve the approach. Good progress has been

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

made in developing the outdoor learning areas, where children are encouraged to be active and purposeful learners.

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

Nearly all of the parents and carers who returned questionnaires are happy overall with their children's experience at the school. They are especially pleased with children's safety in the school, the sense of enjoyment, pupils' progress, the teaching, the meeting of children's particular needs and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. These positive views reflect the findings of the inspection. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that most pupils are well behaved most of the time and that the school has clear and effective procedures for dealing with any unacceptable behaviour that may occur. The school has been successful in supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Andrew's CofE VC Lower 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 141 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 366 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	92	65	45	32	2	1	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	100	71	40	28	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	80	57	55	39	5	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	84	60	49	35	3	2	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	84	60	50	35	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	73	52	63	45	4	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	81	57	58	41	1	1	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)	76	54	56	40	6	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	85	60	50	35	1	1	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	61	43	68	48	6	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	61	43	67	48	5	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	75	53	61	43	3	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	93	66	42	30	2	1	1	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



13 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School, Biggleswade, SG18 0LY

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school, giving us your views and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit thoroughly. St Andrew's is a good school. The speech and language provision is successful in helping those of you with special learning needs. There are some outstanding things.

These are the main strengths.

You enjoy school thoroughly and your attendance is above average.

You get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Your spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding.

You are making good progress because of the good teaching you receive.

You enjoy a good range of learning activities including clubs, visits and visitors.

You get on well with each other and your behaviour is mostly good.

You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.

You feel extremely safe at school because teachers and other adults take excellent care of you and provide outstanding guidance and support.

You make valuable contributions to school life and to the wider community.

The headteacher leads the school well and receives good support from other senior leaders.

We have given your school a few points for improvement.

We have asked teachers to ensure that full use is made of learning time in all lessons so that learning moves on at a good pace.

We have also asked them to ensure that tasks are always challenging, particularly for those of you who can learn quickly.

We would like you to have more opportunities to apply your skills and learn independently.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.