

St Aldhelm's Church of England Voluntary Aided Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113830
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	378759
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2011
Reporting inspector	John Cavill

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	510
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mandy Gridley
Headteacher	Neil Revell
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 May 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 24 lessons and observed 21 teachers. They held meetings with governors, local authority representatives, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, analysed recent evidence on pupils' progress and performance, examined a range of documents, and looked at the school's priorities for development. They also analysed 191 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by staff and pupils.

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

- How effectively the school is improving pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- How effectively the provision at the school, especially teaching and the curriculum, meet the needs of all pupils, in particular boys, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the more able.
- How effectively leaders, at all levels, are contributing to the improvement of the school.

Information about the school

St Aldhelm's Church of England Voluntary Aided Combined School is a larger than average middle deemed primary school. Extended provision is provided by 'The Lookout Club' a before- and after-school and holiday club for the pupils, which is managed by the school. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average as is the percentage known to be eligible for free school meals. A recent building programme at the school has expanded and improved the Early Years Foundation Stage accommodation to allow the school to increase the number of pupils that can be admitted this year into the Reception classes. The school has gained some recent awards including the South West Healthy Schools Plus Award, the Financial Management Standard In Schools Award, and the Basic Skills Award for the fourth time.

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 and takes great pride in its outstandingly welcoming and inclusive 'Spirit of St Aldhelm's' ethos. Its key strength is in the care, guidance and support pupils receive, which is excellent. It is particularly the case for those pupils whose individual circumstances make them more vulnerable and the school makes effective use of external agencies to fully support their well-being. One parent expressed a typical view in the comment, 'This is an excellent school, committed to obtaining the very best for its pupils'.

Pupils report that they enjoy being at school; as one pupil commented, 'I love every part of this school'. They demonstrate good attitudes towards their learning, with high levels of engagement and concentration. In the pupils' survey, most pupils said that they felt safe at school, a view confirmed by their parents and carers. Indeed this is an extremely safe school with safeguarding of children placed at the centre of its work. The pupils are very respectful, have a well-developed moral code and respond positively to the high expectations at the school. As a result, behaviour is good. They are confident that the school deals effectively with any incidents of unacceptable behaviour.

Teaching and learning are good. As a result, most pupils make good progress and achieve well. However, in a few lessons, teaching is not challenging enough to ensure that all pupils attain as well as they might. In these lessons, assessment information is not used consistently enough to ensure that all pupils make the progress that they could, especially in writing. Pupils' attendance is above average and this, together with their above average levels of attainment, means they are well equipped to develop skills for the future.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have many opportunities to fully inform their perspective on life through the wide range of spiritual experiences that the school provides. Their social and moral development is guided by the strong emphasis the school places on values for life, which are continuously highlighted and modelled around the school by both adults and children. The 'Learning Adventure Without Horizons' curriculum is becoming a fundamental element of the range of experiences used to ensure that pupils explore their own heritage within the multicultural and diverse global community with enthusiasm.

The headteacher has a clear view of what is needed for the continued improvement

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and development of the school and the leadership team is united in sharing his vision. The process for self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, correctly identifying the school's strengths and areas for development. Detailed planning for improvement and thorough monitoring of these areas ensure that the school continues to move forward. Consequently, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - raising attainment and accelerating progress in writing
 - improving the consistency with which teachers use assessment information to ensure that lessons always provide challenge and engage all pupils.

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

Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well as reflected in the school's national awards. They make good progress from starting points that are broadly average to reach levels of attainment that are above average by the end of Year 6 and show further improvement in Year 7. Attainment is stronger in mathematics than in English, especially in writing. This discrepancy has already been identified by the school and several well-planned improvement strategies are in place. The gap that existed between the attainment of boys and girls is rapidly closing due to successful intervention strategies and the improved curriculum with a focus on activities to better engage boys. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and some are making exceptional progress. This is because the support they receive is tailored to their needs and delivered well by the teachers and teaching assistants.

In lessons, most pupils make good progress and enjoy learning. The pupils' good behaviour and strong relationships, both with their peers and adults, ensure they benefit very well from their education. They are able to work cooperatively and as part of a team when required, and can show independence in their learning. Pupils say they enjoy their work more when the learning is 'active' and there are opportunities to work together. However, in those few lessons where the personal challenge is less for pupils, they can sometimes become disengaged from their learning and this leads to some low-level disruption.

Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual arriving at school and getting into lessons. They are able to apply their basic skills securely in lessons, and are keen to develop their computer skills in a range of lessons. Pupils are very keen to take action to improve their health and this is reflected in the Healthy Schools Plus award. Most participate in the wide range of after-school sports clubs which, in many cases, are oversubscribed and additional arrangements have had to be put into place. They reported to inspectors that they want to eat packed lunches because they want to make the choice as to what they eat. Many pupils cycle to school and a

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very successful 'walking bus' is organised by parents, carers and governors.

The pupils are very proud of their school and are keen to participate in the range of opportunities that are on offer. There is an active school council that allows pupils to influence decisions made at the school and their views are sought to help shape the learning. The school has fostered outstanding relationships with parents and carers to support fully the education of their children. Responses to the questionnaires substantiate this which is best seen in the comment from one parent who stated: 'I really feel that the school is working "with me" for the best education and care. Everything is explained fully and any queries or concerns are met.'

The school has been very successful in promoting high expectations and good routines with the pupils, and this has led to a calm, cohesive and welcoming school, where pupils' behaviour, and respect for others in school, and around the local community, is good.

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	1
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

How effective is the provision?

Pupils' learning is good in most lessons because they are taught well and teachers have clear learning intentions that engage pupils and secure good progress. The school's robust new tracking systems provide teachers with an overview of pupils' individual progress to assist effective planning. Teachers match the work closely to the needs of individual pupils, provide 'active' tasks that develop independence in pupils' learning and target their questioning and check pupils' work carefully to gain a

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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clear view on how well they understand the work. In a few lessons, teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' prior achievement. This sometimes leads to a small minority of pupils becoming disengaged and losing interest in their work. The impact of this is that these pupils' learning is not being moved forward quickly enough. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and constructively. Feedback is given to the pupils in a variety of formats that is well matched to their ability.

The school has developed a new creative curriculum that has a strong focus on enjoyment and achievement, is broad and balanced and starting to produce improved pupils' outcomes. It is monitored and reviewed extensively by senior leaders to identify the strengths and weaknesses and these are informing future developments. It is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has placed a strong emphasis on developing pupils' writing skills through ensuring that the new curriculum contains many opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their writing in a range of subject areas.

Pupils receive excellent care through the nurturing ethos that exists at the school. In the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of pupils said they felt adults in the school cared about them, a view shared by the parents and carers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive very well coordinated provision, enabling them to achieve well, feel secure and be well supported at school. Interventions are targeted very well to reach the pupils who would benefit the most. 'The Lookout Club' extended school provision provides a very caring, stimulating and safe environment for pupils at both ends of the school day. Pupils are rewarded routinely to encourage high expectations and the chapel within the school provides a place where pupils are able to reflect and feel secure.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong strategic direction and vision to the school and has put in place a careful and purposeful restructuring, changing the responsibilities of the senior staff to embed this securely. The school leadership team has high expectations of pupils and sets challenging objectives for key areas of the school's development to improve outcomes for all pupils. This has galvanised the staff together and they now share their commitment and vision to improving the school still further. Systems to implement and monitor improvement are already embedded, effective and well organised, and ensure new initiatives are linked directly to the

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school improvement plan. The leadership team works collaboratively with the rest of the staff to monitor and improve teaching and plans are in place to develop peer observations in partnership with a local school. Comprehensive pupil tracking systems have been put into place and are being used at all levels to ensure that pupils are making enough progress and, if necessary, given extra support. Inclusive practice lies at the heart of the school's planning and is effective in eradicating discrimination and ensuring good opportunities for all pupils, so that all have an equal opportunity to succeed.

The governing body is knowledgeable about the work of the school and performs its role well. Governors play a major role in the self-evaluation process and are actively involved in school life through support for activities and visits. The governing body plays a key role in determining the strategic direction of the school, providing challenge and support. It rigorously scrutinises proposals to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved for all pupils and parents and carers.

The headteacher and staff have established very strong partnerships with parents and carers and they listen carefully to their views about the school. The strength of partnerships at the school exists in the support for pupils' well-being. Partnerships have a direct impact on pupils' learning are well developed but the school is in the process of evaluating and developing these further to ensure that they provide effective value for the school and pupils' learning. The school has established links with schools both nationally and internationally but pupils' awareness of their place in a global community is less well developed. This has been arrived at following a comprehensive evaluation and the school has a clear plan of action to promote a wider understanding of communities and cultures across the world.

The school's safeguarding procedures are exceptionally robust. Protecting pupils' welfare is given the highest priority and good procedures are wholly embedded.

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	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money

2

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children start in the Reception Year, their skills are usually broadly in line with those typically seen in this age group. There are some particular strengths in their personal, social and emotional development and some weaknesses in their communication, language and literacy skills. They make good progress because staff use highly effective assessment procedures to assess accurately and monitor their learning to provide tasks and activities that are tailored to their individual needs. In the Reception class, children come to school enthusiastic and ready to learn. They quickly settle to a wide range of well-presented opportunities that promote social interaction. The progress in personal skills is evident in the way that most of the children play together well. Routines are well established, including promoting a healthy lifestyle, and children respond well to adults and other children. Most children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress during the year, although some children are still below age-related expectations when they move into Year 1; this is particularly evident in writing. Most children show a willingness to keep themselves and others safe through careful use of resources.

The Early Years Foundation Stage has just moved into purpose-built accommodation, which provides children with an interesting, welcoming and well-equipped environment that successfully reflects most children's backgrounds and the wider community. The balance of activities initiated by children and those led by adults is very well planned to provide exciting play-based learning. Teachers and other adults have a good knowledge of the learning and development and welfare requirements of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and this leads to good and effective teaching and learning. Careful planning ensures that most children are suitably challenged by the learning experiences provided. These are well matched to the needs of the children, as a consequence of accurate observations and assessment.

Strong leadership by the newly appointed leader, supported by a committed team in the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensures that all children have the opportunity to achieve well. Some initiatives such as the new assessment procedures are starting to have some impact on pupils' learning. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development, such as planning for use of the new accommodation, and actions are focused on helping children make good progress in their learning and development. Resources are well deployed and there are good links with external agencies that support the work with potentially vulnerable children. There are strong links with parents and carers starting with a comprehensive induction programme at the beginning of the year. Safeguarding is given a high priority and children are kept very safe.

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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

An overwhelming majority of the responses to the inspection questionnaire were positive, with most parents and carers indicating a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school. All parents and carers who completed the questionnaire stated that they thought that teaching was good at the school, a view that inspectors share. Almost all parents and carers thought the school kept their children safe and that the school cares for their children well. Inspectors found the provision for supporting children's welfare and emotional well-being to be outstanding. A very small minority of parents and carers thought that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour but inspectors believe that the behaviour at the school is generally good and that effective systems are in place to deal with any incidents of poor behaviour. Almost all of the parents and carers that responded consider that the school is managed effectively. The inspection evidence supports this view.

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 Combined 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 191 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 510 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	102	53	83	43	4	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	125	65	63	33	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	45	24	131	69	11	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	29	125	65	6	3	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	75	39	112	59	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	33	117	61	6	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	71	37	118	62	1	1	1	1
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)	58	30	122	64	2	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	63	33	121	63	6	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	26	120	63	9	5	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	29	123	64	7	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	93	49	93	49	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	109	57	74	39	2	1	3	2

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



22 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Aldhelm's Church of England Voluntary Aided Combined School, Poole, BH12 1PG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently, and for talking to us about your work, telling us what you think of the school and what you enjoy about it. We enjoyed talking with you and would especially like to thank those of you that met with an inspector.

You told us that you thought your school is great. We think that it is good. We found your school to be exceptionally caring and looks after you very well and keeps you safe, and those of you we spoke with think that you are looked after very well too.

A few of you thought that the behaviour was not good at the school so we made sure that we looked carefully at you working in lessons and playing around the school. We think that your behaviour is good, especially around the school. However, we noticed that in lessons a small number of you did not work as hard as you could by not concentrating on your work. We have asked the school to make sure that you can concentrate better on work that is well suited to your ability in the future so you can all make good progress and achieve well. We noticed that you play together well and you make sure that your friends are safe when you are working together.

We have noticed that some of you are not doing as well in writing as you should so we have also asked the school to make sure that you are encouraged to enjoy writing so that you get better results in English in the future.

We really enjoyed coming to your school and hope that you all continue to work hard.

Yours sincerely

John Cavill
Lead inspector

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