

Ardeley St Lawrence Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117420
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379416
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2012
Lead inspector	Vivienne McTiffen

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	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Shaw
Headteacher	Jenny Dingley
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2007
School address	School Lane Ardeley Stevenage SG2 7AJ
Telephone number	01438 861284
Fax number	01438 860372
Email address	admin@ardeley.herts.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	28–29 June 2012
Inspection number	379416



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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 information 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'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Nine lessons or parts of lessons and one assembly were observed. Five members of staff were seen teaching. The inspector spoke to pupils, looked at their work and listened to pupils read. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including development plans, information on pupils' achievement and attendance, monitoring systems and safeguarding documentation. Questionnaire responses from 43 parents and carers, 24 pupils and 12 staff were analysed.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Very few are of minority ethnic heritage or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.

Although deemed a primary school, very few pupils stay until the end of Year 6. The vast majority of pupils transfer to middle schools at the end of Year 4. As a result, it is not possible to draw comparison between the school's performance and current government floor standards.

Since the last inspection, there have been significant leadership and staffing changes. A new headteacher was appointed in 2009. A new teacher for the infant class and a new leader for special educational needs were both appointed in 2011.

The school holds the International Schools Intermediate award.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Strong pastoral care and good academic achievement lead to pupils' good all-round development, greatly valued by parents and carers. One comments, 'Children learn in a fun, exciting way and are allowed to be individual'. The school is not yet outstanding because teaching, while good and improving, is not yet sufficiently consistent to be outstanding.
- Pupils achieve well. By the time most leave at the end of Year 4, they reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils read a range of texts and write expressively. They calculate well but there is a lack of consistent, planned use of mathematics in other subjects.
- Staff enthusiastically motivate learning. They know pupils very well and have high expectations. Teachers do not always make effective use of adult support available or give consistent, targeted feedback to pupils on their learning.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils behave well and have very positive attitudes to learning. They say they get on well in this small school and enjoy working together on shared projects. Pupils say they feel safe. Despite great efforts, the school has met with limited success in helping a very small minority of pupils improve attendance.
- Leaders create a common sense of purpose. Good partnerships successfully promote staff development. Leaders' monitoring is not sufficiently systematic to review the quality of teaching effectively and ensure staff are clear how to improve. Thoughtful promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the school's work. Well-developed community links cultivate pupils' awareness of their own culture and others. Good use of outdoor environments richly enhances the curriculum, widening pupils' experiences and reinforcing their social and academic skills.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon existing good practice to improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring the effective use of adult support to extend learning, especially for pupils of different abilities
 - making time, particularly at the end of lessons, to check on pupils' learning and help them understand how well they are doing and how to improve.

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring leaders systematically review the quality of teaching and help staff understand how to improve
 - consistently planning opportunities for pupils to apply mathematical skills in other subjects
 - devising a wider range of ways to help parents and carers understand the importance of good attendance and its effect on their children's achievement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers who returned questionnaires say pupils achieve well, typified by this comment from one, 'I am extremely happy with the standard of education that my child is receiving. My child is happy and making good progress.'

Children start in the Reception class with levels of attainment expected for their age although some struggle with reading and writing. They make good progress to reach broadly average levels on entry to Year 1. By the end of Year 6, there are too few pupils to gain a picture of overall attainment but these pupils achieve well from their starting points. The school is careful to match work to pupils' age and abilities. By the time they leave, they have well-developed personal qualities and basic skills. The school's data and inspection evidence show that, by the end of Year 2 attainment in reading is above average and by Year 4, when almost all pupils leave the school, attainment is above national expectations. Pupils say they enjoy reading. They read accurately and describe plots and characters. Talking about stories often prompts writing. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Years 1 and 2 re-told a fable to each other. They identified the main story lines, recorded each other's ideas and concentrated on correct use of punctuation. In mathematics, pupils calculate competently and use their skills in problem solving and practical tasks.

Pupils achieve well in collaborative art projects and playing musical instruments. Their talents flourish through keen participation in sports and regular whole-school performances. Pupils develop enterprise skills by marketing the produce they grow in the school garden. They use computers with confidence, often working together to gather information.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. They benefit from well-targeted and regular input so confidence and skills steadily grow. They say they improve in their work because of the help they receive. Other groups,

including those known to be eligible for free school meals and the very few of minority ethnic heritage or who speak English as an additional language, make equally good progress.

Quality of teaching

Pupils say learning is fun and they learn a lot, and parents and carers agree. Relationships are very good and staff are mindful of individual needs. In the Reception class, interesting tasks present a good balance between those led by adults and those children choose for themselves. Staff develop children's speaking, reading and writing skills well. In all classes, teachers often encourage pupils to work together, especially with partners, effectively developing social skills. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Years 3 and 4, pupils made good progress in understanding co-ordinates. The teacher skilfully grouped pupils to match abilities, making good use of other adults to encourage lively discussion and practical involvement. However, teachers do not always deploy additional staff well enough to extend learning, especially for pupils of different abilities. Teachers' marking in books often indicates how pupils can improve. Sometimes, especially at the end of lessons, teachers miss the chance or do not allow enough time to help pupils re-cap on their learning and understand how well they are doing and how to improve.

Teachers link subjects together well in topics. For example, in the Reception class, children read and wrote about mini-beasts before going to the woods to study them. For older pupils, an Olympics topic linked with history work on ancient Greece, incorporating art, design, and information and communication technology. This, together with teaching about various religions, promotes spiritual and cultural development very well. Pupils show a keen interest in learning about other peoples, both past and present, and develop a very good understanding of different cultures. Staff's consistent approach to behaviour management leads to pupils' good moral understanding. The school has an effective and recently improved approach to the teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, ensuring staff have the necessary expertise to give the right level of support in class, group and one-to-one work.

Teachers, especially in Years 1 and 2, have successfully raised attainment in reading. Regular reading activities are well supported by volunteer helpers and parents and carers. Daily linking sounds to letters sessions (phonics) for pupils of all ages are well matched to ability, developing the strategies they need to read, write and spell.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite and well behaved. They concentrate fully in lessons and cooperate well with each other. They talk enthusiastically about the opportunities their school offers them. They say they like to help each other, for example, in preparation for a performance, tending the school garden or developing ideas for their environmental work, reflecting strong social development. Children in the Reception class respond very well to staff's expectations and quickly settle to routines. Key Stage 2 pupils say they feel excited about the move to their next school. They have very positive attitudes towards the next stage of their education, largely due to the school's very

good transition arrangements and pastoral care.

Pupils say they feel safe, a view supported by parents and carers. Pupils confidently say that staff take care of them and respond to their needs. One pupil comments, 'They don't think of us as pupils, they think of us as family'. Pupils strive to do well and say they like achieving rewards. They understand the sanctions for unacceptable behaviour and conform willingly. They know about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and sensibly discuss what bullying means. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour or bullying are very rare but all are diligently recorded and followed up by the school. Issues are often brought to pupils' attention in personal and social education lessons or collective worship, where values are frequently discussed.

For the very large majority of pupils, attendance is average. The school has made concerted efforts to promote good attendance but persistent absence and lateness by a few pupils affects the school's overall figures.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is dedicated to moving the school forward, realistically identifying strengths and areas for improvement. She sets challenging targets and has high expectations of staff and pupils, regularly monitoring performance and levels of achievement. Local partnerships, especially with other schools, are used effectively to extend and share expertise, enabling staff professional development. Members of the governing body are actively involved in all aspects of the school's work. Governors are instrumental in holding leaders to account for the quality of teaching. Leaders are extending aspects of their roles, although the review of teaching by all leaders, ensuring staff know how to improve, is not systematic enough.

Leaders ensure an interesting and rich curriculum which strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The curriculum enriches pupils' experiences through visits, visitors and close involvement with the church and village community. Further afield, links with a school in Kenya and the International Schools Intermediate award provide a backdrop to pupils' knowledge and understanding of different lifestyles and locations. Throughout the school, including the Reception class, there is a strong focus on helping pupils understand faiths other than their own. School and class councils, the Eco-committee and Green Team encourage enthusiastic team work for all ages. Pupils air their views and make a difference to the school environment and beyond. Although subjects are effectively linked together in topics, leaders do not sufficiently ensure that the use of mathematics is consistently planned across the curriculum.

The school is a harmonious and cohesive community. Discrimination is tackled and thorough arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. The school promotes equality well. The headteacher maintains rigorous systems to check pupils' progress, for quick identification of any underperformance. For example, boys' attainment is rising due to extra resources and engaging tasks. Parents and carers are involved in supporting their children's achievement in various ways. A very small number are less well engaged in understanding the impact of poor attendance on

their children's learning.

Since the last inspection, the school has consolidated good levels of achievement and moved forward in key areas such as provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and the monitoring of pupils' progress. These developments, together with a continued focus on improving teaching, indicate the school is in a good position to continue to improve.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



2 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ardeley St Lawrence Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Stevenage, SG2 7AJ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and listening to some of you read. You told me you all get on well and that you are happy at school. I was impressed by the way you work together in teams to improve your school environment and grow produce. Thank you for filling in the questionnaires. Your answers helped me a lot.

You attend a good school and you do well. You reach above expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Whether you leave at the end of Year 4 or Year 6, you say you feel well prepared for your move. This is because staff look after you well and make good arrangements for the next stage of your education. Teachers make lessons interesting and you say learning is fun. Links with the local community and others abroad help you to develop a very good understanding of other peoples and places.

To help you to do even better, I have asked your school to make the following improvements:

- make sure adults in your class help all of you to learn as much as you can
- make sure teachers check your learning, especially at the end of lessons, and help you understand how well you are doing and how to improve
- help staff understand how to improve their teaching even more
- make sure you have chance to use your mathematical skills in other subjects
- help your parents and carers even more to understand the importance of good attendance.

All of you can help by continuing to enjoy your learning and coming to school regularly.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne McTiffen
Lead Inspector

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.**