

Ardleigh St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115084
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	379000
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2012
Lead inspector	Stephen Walker

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	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Barrott
Headteacher	Donna Parker
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Stephen Walker

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited ten lessons and observed six teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, staff and groups of pupils. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence, including the school development plan, the tracking system to monitor pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation, and a sample of pupils' work. He also analysed questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 66 parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and is currently oversubscribed. It serves pupils from the local village and beyond, so a significant number travel some distance to the school. It is housed in a Victorian building which has been extensively refurbished and extended. The school has developed an outdoor learning area as well as a working garden within the school grounds.

The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a very small number from minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is made through the Reception class. Pupils are taught in three mixed-aged classes in Key Stage 1 and 2. The school has achieved National Healthy Schools status.

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	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 that provides a safe and happy atmosphere. Despite many strengths, it is not outstanding because pupils in Year 6 are not reaching the above-average levels of attainment in English and mathematics that would demonstrate exceptionally rapid progress. In addition, the quality of teaching and learning is not yet high enough across the school to promote outstanding achievement.
- Pupils make good progress from starting points that are generally below the levels expected nationally for their age, and attainment is average overall by the end of Year 6. However, a few pupils at risk of underachieving do not always get additional support quickly. Progress targets are not sufficiently challenging to ensure above average standards.
- Teaching is good overall, with some outstanding and some satisfactory practice. There is a positive learning atmosphere in lessons and teachers plan interesting lessons which support good progress for the pupils. However, not all teachers are consistently checking that pupils fully understand the tasks set for them or encouraging pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Teachers sometimes miss the opportunities to develop pupils' skills in writing.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They feel very safe, are polite and respectful, and have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy school and develop into friendly and considerate individuals. Attendance is above average and this reflects pupils' enjoyment of school.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior team have an accurate understanding of the areas for development, including the performance and professional development needs of staff. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' key skills and as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is active in engaging parents and carers so that they can support their children in the learning process.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise levels of achievement so that pupils gain standards in English and mathematics that are well above national averages by:
 - building on the new systems for tracking pupils' progress to provide timely additional support for pupils identified as at risk of underachieving
 - ensuring that teachers are setting challenging performance targets for all their pupils.

- Raise the overall quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by making sure that all teachers:
 - take every opportunity to encourage pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning
 - provide more frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in writing during lessons
 - ensure that pupils understand both the work in lessons and the tasks which are set for them.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The inspection found that achievement is good for pupils during their time at the school, as parents and carers confirm. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is typically average, although there are slight variations from year to year because the year groups are very small and each pupil's performance can have a significant impact on results. Assessment data and lesson observations indicate that pupils are currently making good progress in English and mathematics across the year groups. The school is effectively supporting the more-able pupils, particularly in mathematics, ensuring that they gain the higher levels in their work.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below the levels expected for their age. They make good progress in their learning because of the well-planned provision and the consistently good teaching by both the teacher and teaching assistants. Pupils make good progress in reading from their low starting points so that attainment is only slightly below average: a term behind the national average by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils make good progress in reading because this has been a key focus of the curriculum, and they read regularly in school and at home each day. By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment in reading is in line with the national average. The emphasis on speaking and listening in class through talking with partners and encouraging all pupils to answer questions is greatly supporting the gradual improvement in writing skills.

In lessons, pupils typically learn well and make good progress. They work well with

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others. Pupils are able to reflect on what they are learning and persevere with carefully planned challenges from the teacher. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils made good progress in English, as each group reported back to the class on how a local tourist brochure was using the persuasive techniques which they had learnt about in a previous lesson.

The newly-developed tracking system and range of intervention strategies are increasingly being used to identify and help any pupils who are at risk of underachieving. However, a few of these pupils do not always get additional support quickly. Teachers regularly review pupils' progress but are not always setting sufficiently challenging targets to enable pupils to demonstrate rapid and sustained progress over their time at school. Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with their peers. This is because effective work from teaching assistants helps them to overcome barriers to learning and take part in lessons with the other pupils. The very small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also make good progress.

Quality of teaching

Most teachers plan interesting activities and create a positive learning atmosphere in their classes, as confirmed by parents and carers. Pupils demonstrate enthusiasm for learning and sustain high levels of concentration. Most teachers make sure that the activities are well matched to the different abilities of the pupils. Teachers use a range of practical activities, including the use of the school grounds, which bring learning to life. Disabled students and those who find learning difficult or have special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants in class and taught well when withdrawn for individual and small group work. Marking of work is detailed and shows pupils what they have to do to improve their work.

There are occasional inconsistencies in the usually good quality lessons when teachers assume too much and do not always check that pupils understand both the work in lessons and the tasks set for them. Teachers do not always encourage pupils to take enough responsibility for their own learning. In some lessons, pupils are very reliant on the teacher, and some teachers tend to do the thinking and problem solving for the pupils. Teachers are increasingly effective in engaging pupils in discussions in lessons but often miss opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills.

All pupils have daily periods of literacy and numeracy, and this aspect of the curriculum is supporting the teaching of basic skills, including reading. Teaching actively supports the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. For example, the teaching of different cultures, beliefs and ways of life is good and includes the study of different religions and links with pupils at St Paul's Kutus School in Kenya.

Outstanding teaching is seen when teachers challenge their pupils with high-quality questioning and tasks, as well as encouraging them to take greater responsibility for

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their own learning. Highly-skilled teachers are able to engage the whole class in discussions, and ensure that most pupils have an opportunity to contribute to the lessons. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils made rapid progress in English when the teacher skilfully used questioning and class discussions to enable pupils to interpret mood and feelings from newspaper photographs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is typically good in lessons and around the school, and this contributes to a calm and positive atmosphere for learning and personal growth. The staff apply well-developed systems for promoting positive behaviour and pupils respond well to the rules of the school. Pupils confirm that behaviour is generally good and any misbehaviour is dealt with appropriately by the teachers. There are growing opportunities for the senior pupils to contribute to the good order by helping in the lunch hall and in the playground. The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires believe that behaviour is good and that their children are safe in school. In lessons, pupils consistently meet the school's expectations and respond well to teachers' good use of praise and encouragement to promote good behaviour. As a result, pupils work hard and enjoy their learning. The development of the 'well-being programme' is encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own behaviour.

Although bullying of any kind is extremely rare, pupils, parents and carers say any unkind behaviour, such as teasing and name calling, is dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils gradually develop a good awareness of the different forms of possible bullying such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to sexual orientation, gender, race and disability. The younger pupils appreciate the buddy system, which links them to an older pupil. Pupils feel very safe and secure in the school and have a good awareness of issues relating to safety. They talk confidently about how they would keep themselves safe in a variety of situations such as using the internet, crossing the road and avoiding harmful habits such as smoking.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is working well with all staff to drive the required improvements in the school. She has introduced rigorous systems for monitoring teaching and tracking pupils' progress, which are supporting the improvements in pupils' achievement. Senior leaders provide strong support for the headteacher and are developing their evaluating and monitoring roles, including the observation of lessons. The school development plan is a comprehensive working document with clear actions and targets that are focused on improving the rate of pupils' progress. Professional development is effective for teachers and support staff so that they are continually encouraged to reflect on their practice in order to improve further the quality of learning for the pupils. These factors demonstrate that the school has the capacity to improve further.

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Members of the governing body are well informed and are effective in their evaluating and monitoring roles. The governing body have been particularly active in ensuring greater security of the buildings and making sure that the site entrance on the main road is safe for parents, carers and pupils at the beginning and end of each school day. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and underpin its very caring approach. There is a strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination, which the school does to good effect.

The school has developed an imaginative curriculum which is relevant to pupils' needs and provides a good range of activities. It is very effectively developing the use of the outdoor learning area and garden as an environmental resource for learning. A variety of visits provide effective enhancement for the curriculum, as do the large number of extra-curricular activities which greatly increase pupils' enjoyment and experience of school. The broad range of experiences within the curriculum contributes well to pupils' achievements and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, assemblies and the weekly 'sing and praise' are used well to encourage pupils to think about spiritual and moral issues.

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.



10 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ardleigh St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Colchester, CO7 7NS

Thank you for making me so welcome and for sharing your views with me during the inspection and through your questionnaires. I greatly enjoyed watching your lessons and looking at your work. It was also good to see you during assembly, playtime and lunchtime. Your school is a good one that continues to make significant improvements. I know that your parents and carers value the education provided for you. There are many positive things about your school.

- You enjoy school, attend regularly and work hard in your lessons.
- You are friendly and well behaved.
- You make good progress in English and mathematics.
- You are considerate, respectful and courteous to staff and each other.
- Your teachers provide a range of interesting activities in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
- Your school is led well by the headteacher and the senior leaders.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governing body to ensure that teachers do the following things to make the school even better.

- Check more regularly that you fully understand the tasks set for you.
- Ensure that you are set challenging performance targets.
- Encourage you to take greater responsibility for your own learning.
- Provide you with more opportunities for developing your writing skills.
- Keep a close watch on how well everyone is doing so they can quickly help anyone who needs it.

You can all help by asking the teacher for help when you do not understand the work and trying hard when you are asked to work on your own. I wish you every success in your time at the school and in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Walker
Lead inspector

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