



St Andrew's CofE VA Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113417
LEA Plymouth
Inspection number 279166
Inspection dates 1 December 2005 to 2 December 2005
Reporting inspector Geoffrey Burgess RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Citadel Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Plymouth
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Devon PL1 3AY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01752 201660
Number on roll	197	Fax number	01752 205067
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Val Armitage
Date of previous inspection	4 October 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Val Woollven

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an inner city primary school situated in a commercial area between The Hoe and the centre of Plymouth. Levels of social deprivation are high and a well above average number of pupils qualify for free school meals. Around a sixth of pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds other than White British. Several of these pupils have English as an additional language. The number of pupils who join the school other than at the usual time of admission is above average. Some are vulnerable and many require extra help when they join the school. The overall proportion of pupils who find learning or conforming hard is much higher than in most primary schools. The attainment of children when they start school is well below that seen in most schools, notably in their personal and language development.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Andrew's is an outstanding school but it sets itself such high standards that it sees itself as good. It provides a haven of quality, security and calm in a fragmented community. Many of its richly varied intake start or join the school later than usual, with poor language and social skills and low self-esteem. By the time they leave, they are happy, confident learners who are pleased to express themselves and contribute to the life of the school. Key to the school's success is its very positive, caring and inclusive ethos.

Children are given an excellent start in the Reception class. High quality teaching ensures that pupils make excellent progress, although achievement in reading and writing is not quite as good. The school is working on this and on helping its less experienced teachers to develop their skills to match the very high levels seen in other classes.

Pupils' exceptional behaviour, social awareness and attitudes to learning are fitting testaments to the remarkable efforts the school makes to support and guide them in these areas. Relationships and communications are very good. Great care is taken to ensure that the school provides a rich range of activities which are very well matched to pupils' needs and interests.

The school is constantly trying to improve. Excellent leadership and management has seen it maintain its first-rate provision and enviable reputation in the community. The school's track record shows that it still has the capacity to continue to improve and thrive. It provides very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in literacy skills so that standards match those in maths and science.
- Support less experienced teachers as they aspire to match the very high standards set by their colleagues.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding, given the very low base from which they start. Challenging individual and group learning targets are regularly achieved. A particular strength is the way in which pupils with a wide variety of learning needs succeed at their own level. The increasing number of pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress. Those who have learning difficulties also move on rapidly.

Children in the Reception class make very good progress and several are on course to reach the standards expected for their age before the end of the school year. An encouraging sign for the future is the fact that this year, pupils in Year 2 achieved average standards in the national tests for the first time ever. This shows very good

progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 are doing equally well.

Observations in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' progress books and school records show that pupils achieve much better standards than those in similar schools by the end of Year 6. Recent results in Year 6 national tests confirm that pupils of all abilities and from a range of backgrounds make excellent progress in mathematics and science. Although literacy standards have been lower than in mathematics and science, pupils start from a lower base and their progress in this area is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding as a result of the exceptional efforts made by the school. Children really enjoy school and are made to feel good about themselves. For example, the self-esteem and pride of Year 1 pupils after their class assembly was almost tangible. Many parents say how very excited their children are about what they have been doing. Almost all attend very regularly. Children are open, friendly and welcoming. They behave very well and are extremely polite, spontaneously greeting all visitors with "Good morning". Their awareness of other faiths and cultures develops well. The school's Christian ethos is powerful but unobtrusive and securely supports the pupils' spiritual development.

Following the examples of the adults in school, older pupils provide very good role models for their younger schoolmates. One child summed up the school community as 'like a book...we're a team – nothing can break us'. Children develop very good understanding of the importance of regular exercise through the many activities that help them to keep fit. They also gain a strong awareness of the importance of healthy eating. Friday afternoon enrichment sessions make a substantial contribution to ensuring that children's social skills and cultural awareness increase very effectively. Various initiatives help pupils to become very aware of the wider community. For instance, Year 6 pupils enjoy writing to pen friends in Hungary, and pupils raise funds to help educate a boy in Ethiopia.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The excellent quality of teaching is shown by the way, year on year, pupils thrive and make tremendous progress as they move through the school. Further evidence comes from the eagerness pupils show for learning, their willingness to 'have a go', and their evident desire to please. It is also significant that two senior teachers have been officially recognised for their advanced teaching skills. From the Reception class on, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Confident and knowledgeable teachers challenge pupils with thought-provoking activities. Expectations of the standards all pupils are capable of attaining are very high. Work

is very carefully planned to be taxing but 'doable' for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. Although the overall quality of teaching is highly effective, the school is aware that some less experienced teachers need time to achieve the high standards of their more experienced colleagues.

Very skilled teaching assistants, working closely with teachers, make an exceptional contribution, notably working with children who find learning difficult. A particular feature of the school is the way in which teaching assistants are given time to plan lessons with the teachers. Teachers routinely check on pupils' progress and refocus their teaching using well-established very effective procedures. Pupils are clear about what they need to learn and very proud when they achieve their learning targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding curriculum is exceptionally well tailored to the ever-changing range of children's needs. The excellent early years curriculum has been recognised as a model of good practice and copied further afield. Literacy and numeracy skills are at the core of all learning. Excellent use of local cultural and historic sites to broaden pupils' experiences prompts some thoughtful pieces of writing.

Regular special weeks, such as on Africa and India, when work in many subjects focuses on a particular theme, are much appreciated by pupils and parents. The school's commitment to the enrichment of day-by-day lessons is exemplary. It skilfully draws on the expertise of staff, parents and visitors, and pupils benefit from a rich variety of activities. A Friday afternoon enrichment session observed included 16 activities ranging from dance, yoga, sewing and mosaics, to first aid, gardening and Russian.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding care, guidance and support make children feel very happy and safe in school. All staff, including the caretaker, the dinner ladies and the administrative team, ensure pupils' welfare is paramount and their health and safety secure. The school's many important awards include the Active Gold Mark and the Healthy Schools Award. These recognise the invaluable work it does to help each child feel valued and be healthy. The school has a strong family feel and provides a calm, nurturing environment in which children can grow and flourish. Staff know children very well and are particularly alert to any who may be having a hard time at school or at home. The headteacher invests a great deal of time in supporting and counselling parents and carers which, in turn, benefits the pupils. The school's well-attended breakfast club is an effective way of making sure children start the day with a nourishing breakfast as well as helping them to keep up with their homework.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher, staff and governors are to be congratulated on making St Andrew's School a beacon of all that is good in primary education. This has been achieved in an unpromising area, on a cramped site and with an increasing amount of pupils who are vulnerable and who join the school other than at the usual time of admission. It represents excellent leadership and management by the whole team. The focus of the school community is on providing the best for, and getting the best out of, all children. Every possible human and physical resource is exploited to make this achievable. Every nook and cranny in the school has been turned into a teaching area. Inclusion and involvement are at the heart of everything, as recognised by the Inclusion Kitemark gained recently. Diversity is celebrated and vulnerability recognised and managed. The school does all it can to encourage parents and carers to get involved in their children's education.

The contribution of the headteacher over several years has been outstanding. She ensures that everyone has the opportunity, capability and support to make a positive contribution and is very good at getting the best out of those with whom she works. This is shown by the impressive number of staff promoted to senior posts in other schools. Governors, staff and pupils have the confidence to be self-critical and open about how well they and the school are doing. Excellent monitoring procedures ensure that they know what works and what could be even better. The Governance of the school reflects the outstanding care, guidance and support, with the long-serving chair a very influential and much appreciated 'critical friend'. The high quality education provided represents very good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

St Andrew's CE VA Primary School Citadel Road Plymouth PL1 3AY

3 December 2005

Dear Pupils,

We really enjoyed our time at your school and would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. You will probably know by now that, like you, we think St Andrew's is a great school.

This is what we liked most about your school:

- everyone is welcomed and valued. You are very polite
- you try really hard and are always willing to have a go. A lot of you make fantastic progress
- you take a real pride in your school and thoroughly enjoy all the exciting activities your teachers and helpers provide for you
- all the adults help and look after you very well. You know they are your friends
- we agree with you that your headteacher is 'brilliant'. She knows exactly what to do to get the best out of everyone.

To make things even better, this is what we have asked your school to do now:

- see what more your teachers can do to help you read and write as well as you do maths
- help all your really good teachers to be as good as the best.

Once again, well done. We know that you will carry on helping all the grown-ups to make sure St Andrew's stays a very special school.

Yours faithfully,

The Inspection Team