



The Abbey Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, St Albans

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117449
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280082
Inspection dates 6 October 2005 to 7 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. Paul Cosway LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Grove Road
School category	Voluntary aided		AL1 1DQ
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01727851802
Number on roll	198	Fax number	01727766991
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Sarah Cowper
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Elizabeth Grundy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school near the centre of St. Albans. This is a relatively advantaged area. Fewer than average numbers of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities: the ones who have show moderate learning difficulties. Almost all the pupils are of white British descent. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. It is a Church of England, voluntary aided school, with a strong Christian ethos. The children enter the school with skills, knowledge and understanding which is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with many outstanding features, and it gives good value for money. The school judges itself to be good and shows, in its improvement plan, that it has an excellent understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. The standards that pupils reach are high and their personal development is outstanding. They learn to be well-behaved, responsible, caring and courteous. The school develops in them a love of learning and the very good, caring ethos ensures that they make good progress in all aspects of their education. The very hard-working and dedicated members of staff show concern for every individual. The provision is good and standards above average in Reception. Support and guidance for pupils are good. Some aspects of support are excellent, but the quality and usefulness of marking needs further improvement. The outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher have ensured that the school has improved since its previous inspection and is well placed to improve further. She has introduced very effective management systems. She has also brought an increased focus on assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress, though not yet all teachers are following the guidance. Leadership and management skills of teachers are being developed but there is more to be done. The school has a high reputation in the local area. Pupils, their parents and carers think the school is very good. Parents' responses to the questionnaire indicate that their children are happy at school and come home talking enthusiastically about the new things that they have learnt.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve marking to give more detail to pupils of what they need to do to raise their standards of their work. - Further develop the leadership and management roles of teachers so that all can lead and manage their areas of responsibility very effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in Reception from above average levels on entry to the school. All reach at least the expected level for their age by the end of Year 2. In the assessments for seven year olds, the pupils' attainment is well above average. It is especially high in writing, where figures have been in the top five per cent of pupils nationally. Increased emphasis on the teaching of reading and reading for pleasure is raising reading scores to similar levels. By the age of eleven, attainment is well above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils are also reaching high standards in other subjects, including religious education and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils for whom English is an additional language and others who have moderate learning difficulties or disabilities also make good progress. The school works hard to ensure that every pupil has the best possible chance to make progress. Almost all pupils meet their targets, which are based on their prior attainment, and a

significant proportion exceeds them. The school believes that pupils make good progress and the inspection findings agree with this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Most pupils behave very well and show splendid attitudes to their work. They really enjoy school and are very keen to succeed. Attendance and punctuality are excellent. Pupils respond extremely well to the good opportunities for them to act as elected members of the school council. They take on responsibilities eagerly around the school and in the local church and community. Particularly impressive is the very confident way in which the Year 6 pupils manage the school office during lunchtimes. Pupils with learning difficulties and the few who speak English as an additional language are integrated fully so that they take part in all aspects of school life. Most pupils bring fruit snacks and enjoy climbing or swinging on the adventure playground apparatus at break times to help them stay healthy. Many take part enthusiastically in additional after-school physical activities and inter-school sports events. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school promotes pupils' spiritual and moral growth very well through its strong Christian ethos and frequent contact with the local church. Social and cultural aspects are taught well and pupils learn to be respectful and fair to others. This, together with the good level of basic skills they achieve, prepares them well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The inspection found that teaching is good overall. Some teaching is outstanding. All the children spoken with like their teachers and their lessons. Teachers plan their lessons very well to interest and motivate their pupils. They use ICT effectively to help pupils to learn and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. They use a good range of teaching methods so that pupils are learning not just by listening, but by visual stimulus and practical activities. For example, in a Year 3 numeracy lesson the pupils were given a number card and then asked to find their number partner. To do so, they had to work out the difference between their number and 100 and then find another pupil who had the number they needed. This was an enjoyable and useful game which prepared them well for their next problem. All made excellent progress because they were interested; the task was carefully explained so that they understood it and those who needed additional guidance were supported well. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and they manage them well. As a result, pupils respond to the high expectations of the teachers by working hard, trying to succeed and answering questions sensibly and thoughtfully. However, not all teachers are giving pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. Parents and carers support their children well in their learning at home.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. All of the required subjects of the National Curriculum are included and there is a strong focus on promoting pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Good links are made between subjects such as art and religious education. The good accommodation and resources include plenty of computers in the information and communication technology suite. These are used very well to benefit pupils' learning across all subjects. The activities organised for extending pupils' personal, social and health education helps them to find out how to stay healthy and safe, and prepares them well for later life. The school is currently working towards the Healthy Schools' Award. The outstanding range of clubs, outdoor and indoor activities has a very good effect upon pupils' personal development. Activities such as football, chess, singing, instrumental tuition and music concerts all enhance pupils' enjoyment and achievement beyond the classroom and help to raise their self-esteem considerably.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for sensitively in a supportive and strongly Christian environment. All members of staff know the children and their families well. They make sure that the children are kept safe and secure during lessons and at playtimes. The procedures for child protection are satisfactory and are well-known by staff. Further training is being done to up-date teachers' knowledge. All staff act as excellent role models for the pupils, in the love, care and respect that they show for them. The school secretary is not only highly efficient, but also welcoming to parents and visitors. Almost all parents are very pleased with the care and guidance given to their children and welcome the regular opportunities for them to meet the teachers. Most parents of pupils with specific learning difficulties feel that they are kept well informed of their children's progress. The school's recently re-organised 'Inclusion Team' is developing its arrangements to knit together the provision for all pupils with learning and language needs and improve it further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall, and some aspects are outstanding. The school judges them to be good. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the school has improved considerably since the time of the last report. Both the use of data for school improvement and teachers' planning were areas of significant weakness when the present headteacher took over. Her understanding and use of data is outstanding and is helping to bring further improvements. The guidance she has given teachers on their planning and her monitoring of teaching has helped to improve the quality and consistency of teaching. The re-organisation of the 'Inclusion Team' is evidence of her commitment to meet the needs of all pupils. Parents value the leadership of the headteacher and they and the pupils recognise that their opinions

are taken account of in the running of the school. Under her leadership, and with the support of staff, governors, parents and pupils, the school is well-placed to make further improvements. The governance of the school is good. Many governors have a good knowledge of its work. They are monitoring its work very effectively. Similarly, some teachers have responded very well to the leadership training that has been done. They are evaluating teaching and learning in their subjects, principally literacy and numeracy, very well. This is an on-going programme and the school recognises that it needs to continue so that all can be equally effective.

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	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?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	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	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

Thank you very much for your help and friendliness when we visited your school. In the lessons that we saw, almost all of you were working hard and trying your best. We were impressed by your willingness to answer questions and how much you enjoyed your lessons. Your behaviour at the church was excellent. You all made interesting and meaningful contributions to the Harvest Festival service and it was a joy to watch. The inspection team has decided that your school is good, with some outstanding features. One of these is the way that it helps you in your personal development, so that you grow up with a love of learning, caring, thoughtful of others and ready to become good citizens. All the adults in school care for you well and you feel safe and happy. The teaching is good, sometimes excellent, and you have interesting and enjoyable lessons. This helps you to make good progress. By the time you reach Year 6 many of you are reaching high standards, well above those in most other schools. We have asked your teachers, when they mark your work, to tell you how to make it better. This will help you to make even faster progress. Your school is led very well indeed by your headteacher. We have asked her to continue to train teachers to be excellent leaders so that they can help her to make the school even better. You have lots of clubs, activities and trips that help you to learn and you help your local community. Your parents think that this is a good school and they are right. Enjoy your time at school and continue to work hard. Best wishes for the future,