

St Aidan's Church of England Voluntary Aided First School, Skelmanthorpe

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107744
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	287903
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Ronald Cohen

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	5–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alwyn Cooper
Headteacher	Mrs Evelyne Barrow
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003
School address	Smithy Close Skelmanthorpe Huddersfield West Yorkshire HD8 9DQ
Telephone number	1484 222951
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Nearly all the pupils at this smaller than average sized school are from White British family backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion entitled to free school meals. The school has been accredited with the Healthy Schools Gold Award. The headteacher has been in post for 18 months. All pupils transfer to a middle school at the end of Year 5.

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 some outstanding features, particularly pupils' personal development and well-being, and the warm and nurturing way that pupils are cared for, guided and supported.

Pupils behave extremely well, show exemplary attitudes to learning, and speak very knowledgeably about how to keep safe and healthy. Pupils develop a real joy in learning, and contribute positively towards their school and local community. These striking personal qualities provide a positive platform, upon which pupils are prepared to become responsible and confident young citizens of the future, and on which they make good academic progress. Parents are very supportive. They are confident that their children receive a good quality of education. Many say how this reflects the shared commitment and dedication of everyone in school to their children's welfare and achievements.

Pupils enter the Reception year with skills which are broadly average. As a result of good quality teaching and learning and a good curriculum, children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. Despite major improvement, the outdoor learning is still inhibited by the physical environment. The Foundation Stage coordinator, headteacher and governors are working hard to implement the building plans to overcome this barrier to learning.

Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 5 are well above average. This is due to teaching and learning which are good. In the best classes, high expectations, work that is well matched to pupils' varying learning needs, along with high quality marking that helps pupils to understand how well they are getting on, all make a strong contribution to pupils' good progress. But these features are not seen consistently, and, as a result, pupils' learning, particularly for the more able pupils, is sometimes slower. The exciting continuous provision curriculum boosts pupils' engagement in learning, but some opportunities are missed to reinforce learning by engaging in focused practice sessions in the classroom.

Pupils' good overall academic achievement and their outstanding personal development is the result of good leadership, management and governance. The headteacher's passion for ensuring that pupils achieve well in a very safe and particularly enriching setting is highly evident. Effective partnerships beyond school, contribute to the good quality of education on offer. The professionalism, commitment and dedication of all staff make an equally strong contribution to the school's success. Improvement priorities, such as raising standards in writing, are well chosen and carefully planned. Senior leaders, governors and staff give good support to the new headteacher. Good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in Foundation Stage provision, together with pupils' personal development and well-being, demonstrates a good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision and strong leadership in the Foundation Stage enable children's learning to get off to a successful start. When children begin in the Reception class, their skills are broadly typical for their age. They have particular strengths in disposition and attitudes, number skills and shape and space measurement. They are weaker in writing and physical development, including fine motor skills. When they leave at the end of the year, they have acquired levels that exceed expectations for their age. The very warm and caring relationships between adults

and children, along with the bright, lively and creative indoor learning environment, ensure that children quickly develop a thirst for learning. However, there is insufficient additional space for children to engage in independent activities throughout the day. The leadership is aware of the limitations of the outdoor area and has plans in place for future development. Effective links with pre-school settings and with parents ensure that children settle quickly into school routines. Children benefit from being with Year 1 pupils. By mixing with older ones, they develop better personal and social skills and they have more opportunities to interact with others with higher academic skills. A good balance is struck between enabling children to make their own decisions in play and learning, coupled with focused tasks to develop individuals' knowledge and understanding. Assessment is used effectively to tailor work to meet children's needs. Provision is well managed so that children are safe and secure.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase children's access to a greater range of outside physical activities by implementing the building plans already approved.
- Make sure that all teaching is consistently in line with the best practice in the school.
- Ensure an appropriate balance between activities in the curriculum which inspire and stimulate, but which also give opportunities for more formal practising of skills recently learned.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From a relatively low point in 2005, standards at the end of Year 2 have risen and were well above average in 2007. Results for 2008 show that this good improvement has been maintained. However, there are differences between subjects, with writing lagging a little behind reading and mathematics. At the end of Year 5, pupils attained above average standards in 2007, and current school data show that this position will be replicated by the 2008 cohort. This represents good progress for this group of pupils when taking into account their relative starting points. Girls attain a little better than boys, except in mathematics. This is in line with national trends. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because they have good support to complete work that is matched carefully to their individual learning needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is key to their academic success. Their thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in above average attendance. Pupils learn and play very happily together, and say that they are free from bullying and feel very safe. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils' excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles shows in their eagerness to take part in many energetic activities. They are extremely keen to make their school a happier, safer and healthier place to learn. They relish opportunities for taking on responsibilities, such as being school councillors and 'befrienders'. Pupils show great respect and sensitivity towards one another. They do this not because they are asked to but because they know that it is the kind thing to do. These personal qualities, along with good progress in basic literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills, prepare pupils well for the next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Excellent relationships exist and pupils are very well known to all staff. Pupils respond well to expectations for them to perform practical tasks in lessons and they mostly set good standards for the way they present their work. Teaching assistants are vital in the good support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in helping these children to access all elements of school life. Whilst progress in lessons is good overall, and pupils are often given enough scope to think and act independently, nevertheless, the best lessons were characterised by teachers being more judicious in the time they allowed for, and in the thoroughness with which they checked pupils' learning. This is not yet fully consistent practice across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is well organised, well balanced and fulfils statutory requirements. Subject plans consistently provide a range of stimulating and challenging experiences for pupils. This good quality curriculum enables pupils to make good progress. Recent adaptations to the curriculum in Key Stage 1, include the continuous provision model, These present pupils with opportunities to explore, for themselves, a variety of themes based on what they did in focused learning lessons. Whilst these act as stimuli to learning, the school has not yet quite got the balance right between these stimuli and the necessity for focused and immediate practising of the new skills or reinforcement of the new knowledge which they have just acquired.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding, and pupils achieve well because of this. Child protection procedures, safeguarding arrangements and health and safety systems are strongly in place. The behaviour policy is consistently used well by all staff. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and supported well, so that they are able to understand and attain their own targets and achieve well. The assessment, tracking and monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress is excellent. Most teachers involve pupils very well in their own learning. Effective target-setting in areas of pupils' personal development, literacy or numeracy are helping them to know how to improve their work. Older pupils also have a good understanding of how to improve their academic work. This is because they regularly discuss their learning targets with staff and marking of their work helps them to know how to improve. Such practices, however, are not yet fully consistent across the school. The school ensures that every pupil is nurtured and cared for. Pupils of all ages are fully involved in setting their own personal learning targets, particularly to support their personal development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. Making sure that pupils achieve well in a caring, safe and enriching setting is the hallmark of the school's success. The school is well led

and managed. The headteacher is highly effective, leads by example and works with energy and commitment to drive the school forward. She has a clear vision for the future of the school, and exudes the drive to take it forward. Good systems are taking hold across the school for monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. The school's improvement plan targets the most pertinent areas for moving the school forward and is based upon accurate analyses of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It encompasses not only the views of staff and governors but also of pupils and parents. Governors work closely with the leadership and management team to ensure that pupils benefit from good quality provision, and achieve well. They offer good support and challenge. Appropriate priorities have been identified and a full range of strategies has been implemented. These have led successfully to improvements in many aspects of the school's work. The achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning is at the top of the school's agenda. The setting of challenging academic targets for each year group is helping to raise expectations for pupils and staff and making sure pupils' achievement is brought up to where it should be. The school gives good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Aidan's Church of England Voluntary Aided First School, Skelmanthorpe, Huddersfield, HD8 9DQ

Thank you so much for the extremely warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you and you helped me to see why you enjoy school so very much. You were all extremely keen to talk to me and answered my questions very thoughtfully and politely. I was particularly impressed with how well you behave and all look after one another. I enjoyed hearing about all the chances you have to make your school a healthier, happier and safer place to learn. All the adults care a great deal about everyone, but you are also so very kind and caring towards one another. It is no wonder that you told me that you feel so safe and happy in school. You get lots of chances to learn by taking part in exciting activities, both in and beyond school. When you told me how well you cope with going away from home on your residential trips, I realised just how mature and confident you all are.

Many of your parents told me that they are really pleased that you attend St Aidan's Primary. This is because your school is a good school. The standards that you reach at the end of Year 5 are higher than in many other schools. These high standards and your excellent attitudes to learning are the reasons why you are well placed to do well at middle school, and, later, at secondary school. There are, however, a few things that could be even better. This is why I have asked the school to make sure that:

- they complete the building outside the Reception/Year 1. This will give children lots more activities to play with and learn from.
- all the teachers share good ideas so that teaching is always of the best
- you have more chances to practise such things as your writing or your numeracy in focused time, before you go off to your different activities.

You can help, of course, by continuing to try your best at everything. I wish you all good luck for your future at St Aidan's, and beyond.