

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117407
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	290823
Inspection date	11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Vince Bendin
Headteacher	Mrs Sara Brown
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002
School address	Mill Race Stanstead Abbots Ware Hertfordshire SG12 8EZ
Telephone number	01920 870097
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Andrew's CE is a slightly smaller than average sized primary school. About 90% of the pupils come from White British backgrounds. The remainder come from minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language and none of these are at an early stage of learning English. The levels of knowledge that pupils start at the school with varies from year to year and is broadly in line with expectations but a few year groups are slightly below expectations. A significant proportion of pupils join the school part way through the taught year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is just above average. The number eligible for free school meals is below average for a school of this size. At the time of the inspection the school's deputy headteacher was the acting headteacher. A new headteacher had been appointed to start in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Andrew's CE Primary is an improving school and its overall effectiveness is good. Pupils now achieve consistently well across the school and their personal development is good. Parents hold very positive views about the school and are pleased with the care and education provided. A parent commented, 'Children thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school life, are happy and learning well.'

Leadership and management are good. All staff with leadership responsibilities are successfully contributing to effective educational provision and to the improvements made. The acting headteacher has provided stability and continued the drive for improvement. Self-evaluation is used well to drive change. The leadership team is developing well and subject leaders are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring and improving their areas of responsibility. Effective assessment, tracking and target setting systems have been implemented, which mean that teachers have a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing and pupils know what they need to do to improve. Leaders and staff have created a positive climate for learning. As parents commented, 'There is a happy atmosphere in the school'.

Good care, guidance and support contribute to pupils' effective personal and academic development. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected by their above average attendance. They are friendly, polite and relate well to others. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating, keeping safe and regular exercise. Older pupils readily take on additional responsibilities to help others in the school. Pupils also contribute well to the wider community by raising funds for well known charities.

Children in Nursery and Reception get off to a good start because of effective and stimulating provision. They reach standards above those expected for their age by the end of Reception. Good teaching and learning throughout the school enables pupils to make good progress. Teaching is focused and pupils respond well to teachers' clear instructions and explanations. Occasionally, the pace of lessons can decline when pupils are not involved enough in their learning. A good curriculum is enriched by a wide range of additional activities. Effective action has been taken recently to improve progress in reading and writing in Year 1 and 2. As a result, standards are now significantly above average in Year 2 and considerably higher than in previous years. Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6 although standards in current Year 6 are broadly average because of their lower starting points and pupils joining and leaving the year group have adversely affected overall attainment. Pupils in Year 6 have performed less well in mathematics than in other core subjects because there are too few opportunities for pupils throughout Key Stage 2 to solve problems in mathematics lessons or to apply and develop numeracy skills in other subjects. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is much improved since the last inspection and is used well to support teaching and learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more problem solving activities in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 and increase opportunities for pupils to apply and develop numeracy skills in other subjects
- Ensure that all lessons maintain a brisk pace and that pupils are fully involved in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well across the school. Children's attainment on entry to the school has been broadly in line with national expectations in the past. More recently, attainment on entry has been above normal expectations for three-year-olds. Children in Nursery and Reception make good gains in all areas of learning. Standards in the national assessments for Year 2 in 2006 were above average in mathematics but only average in reading and writing. Standards are now significantly above average in all three areas because of effective action taken by the school. Standards are broadly average in Year 6. The current Year 6 entered the school with slightly below average attainment. Pupils have made good progress in Years 3 to 6 but the impact of pupils joining and leaving the year group has been to reduce overall attainment. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of the effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils participate in activities with enthusiasm and show good attitudes to learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In assemblies, pupils appreciate and celebrate the achievements of others. Pupils have positive relationships with adults in the school and amongst themselves. They adopt healthy lifestyles and possess a good understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. Pupils, particularly the older ones, take on additional responsibilities well such as being play leaders, playground mediators and serving on the school council. Pupils are soundly prepared for their future because they are making good progress in acquiring and using literacy skills and they use ICT competently to support their learning. In addition to this, they have good personal and social skills. However, their use of numeracy skills is less strong when they leave.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are more consistent than at the time of the last inspection. Effective teaching and learning are enabling all pupils to make good progress. Teaching in the Nursery and Reception provides a good blend of direct teaching and enabling children to explore and work independently. Across the school, teachers share the purpose of the lesson with the class well so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils. They manage them effectively and so pupils are attentive and respond well. Instructions and explanations are clear and informative and teachers use interactive whiteboards well to illustrate main learning points. Good opportunities are provided for discussion. As a result, pupils' speaking and listening skills are developing well. Assessment is usually used effectively to plan and match tasks to pupils' different abilities and needs. Consequently, pupils are challenged well, their interest is maintained and they make good progress. Occasionally, the pace of learning can decline with overlong introductions. When this happens, the rate of progress slows because pupils are not actively involved in their learning. For example, when pupils are keen to get on with the main task, this drive and enthusiasm is not always capitalised on. Teaching assistants give good quality support, particularly to pupils with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Effective strategies have been implemented to improve achievement in writing across the school and in reading in Years 1 and 2. However, pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not have sufficient opportunities for investigative work in mathematics or to use their mathematical skills in other subjects. ICT is used well to support teaching and learning in a range of subjects. A good range of clubs including choir, netball, rounders and science add to pupils' interest. Thursday's enrichment activities include art, music, French, ICT and drama. Pupils find these great fun and they benefit from the specific expertise of different teachers. The choir had the exciting opportunity of performing at the Royal Albert Hall in March. Visits successfully enhance pupils' learning and a residential trip to Cornwall for Years 5 and 6 provides challenging outdoor activities and builds pupils' social skills. Health and personal safety education receive good attention. The Foundation Stage curriculum for children in the Nursery and Reception provides stimulating activities through interesting topics such as celebrations, mini beasts, pirates and new life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good pastoral care and support contribute well to pupils' personal development. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are effective, so pupils are safe and secure at school. Staff know the pupils well and have established good relationships with them. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment and progress are good. Assessment information is used well to plan teaching activities and to set challenging individual learning targets in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils know what they are working towards in these subjects. The marking of pupils' work is helpful and constructive but in some cases, comments to help them improve are lacking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are effectively promoting good educational provision and this is leading to good outcomes for pupils. The acting headteacher provides strong leadership and has received effective support from other leaders. Subject leaders have benefited from participation in the 'Primary Leadership Programme' and are becoming more effective in monitoring and developing their subjects. The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and has taken effective action to bring about improvements where needed. Occasionally, the reporting of evaluation findings and the analysis of improvements made are not always sharp enough. Nevertheless, improvements to assessment, teaching and to the curriculum have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement particularly in Years 1 and 2. The school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve further.

Governors are committed, supportive and are now well informed about the school's performance. They are providing constructive challenge about pupils' achievement and are fully involved in improvement planning. The school provides 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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	2

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Andrew's CE Primary School, Stanstead Abbots, Hertfordshire, SG12 8EZ

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed the visit and would like to tell you what I have found. The school has made improvements recently. St Andrew's is a good school.

These things are strengths of the school.

- You clearly enjoy school and your attendance is good.
- The school has a positive atmosphere.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception get off to a good start.
- Teaching is good, which is why you are learning well.
- You enjoy the good range of clubs and additional activities provided
- Your behaviour is good and you get on well with others.
- You show a good understanding of healthy living and keeping safe.
- Staff know you very well, take good care of you and give you good support.
- The school is well led.
- Your parents are pleased with the care and education provided.

These areas the school has been asked to improve.

- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 could make even more progress in mathematics by having more problem solving activities and more chances to use their mathematics skills in other subjects.
- Sometimes, your teachers should involve you more in your learning and ensure that lessons maintain a good pace.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. I wish you all the best for the future.

With kind regards,

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector