



St Andrew's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117444
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290837
Inspection date 15 November 2006
Reporting inspector John Messer

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Tower Hill
School category	Voluntary aided		Much Hadham
Age range of pupils	3-11		Hertfordshire SG10 6DL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01279 842 626
Number on roll (school)	209	Fax number	01279 841 070
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Lindsay Steele
		Headteacher	Mrs Judith Sparks
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized village primary school. Most pupils come from relatively advantaged families. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well below average. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few are from minority ethnic families and a very small number speak languages other than English. Attainment on entry to the school is above national expectations.

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. One key strength is the way the whole school community works so closely together to improve the quality of education it provides. Standards are high but there is no complacency. Everybody, including the pupils, is keen to do even better. Pupils' achievement is good and they attain high standards in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are courteous, articulate and self-assured. This contributes well to the good foundations that are laid for their future learning and working lives. Pupils enjoy school immensely. Behaviour is excellent. The curriculum is good and is enriched by many extra activities, such as educational visits and after-school clubs. Care, support and guidance are good. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school. They know who to turn to if they are worried about anything. They have a good understanding of how to eat sensibly, stay healthy and keep fit.

Teaching and learning are good and some is outstanding. The Foundation Stage classes are exceptionally well organised so that children learn rapidly. They make good progress, especially in communication, language and literacy and personal development. Standards are above those expected by the end of the Reception year. Teaching is good in Years 1 to 6. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance and this is a key factor in enabling pupils to attain high standards. However, expectations are not uniformly high across the school and the senior management team is working hard to further improve the consistency of teaching and learning. The national assessments at the end of Year 2 showed that pupils attained standards that were exceptionally high in reading and writing, and above average in mathematics. The results of national tests for pupils in Year 6 showed that results were exceptionally high in English and well above average in mathematics and science.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The overwhelming majority of parents is delighted with the education provided for their children. One typical comment was, 'The new headteacher has an enthusiasm for making the school flourish.' Governors work closely with staff and monitor performance well. The school is analytical and its self-evaluation is accurate. It has correctly identified the need to introduce a system that accurately measures the amount of progress that pupils make in literacy and numeracy each term. At the end of the year when data on progress are analysed, it sometimes reveals that progress in these subjects or among certain groups was not as good as expected. A new scheme is being introduced, designed to ensure that the school has an early warning system that quickly identifies any pupils who are not making as much progress as they should.

What the school should do to improve further

- Rigorously monitor the amount of progress that pupils make in literacy and numeracy in order to quickly identify where improvements are needed.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that more reaches the outstanding level.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children settle happily into the Nursery class where they achieve well. They continue to make good progress in the Reception class and attain standards that are above average. This good progress is maintained in Years 1 to 6. The results of national assessments for pupils in Year 2 in 2006 improved significantly. This is because that group of pupils contained a much higher proportion of more able pupils than the previous year. Pupils' achievement is good overall in Years 3 to 6 but the school identified that last year the amount of progress that pupils made in mathematics did not measure up to the school's high expectations. The groups taking the tests are small and the characteristics of each group are different each year. Consequently there are likely to be variations in the school's performance from year to year. Nevertheless, on average over the past three years standards have been exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. This is a school where pupils consistently attain high standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils are self-assured, talk sensibly about their work and are proud of their achievements. They are sensitive to the feelings of others. Behaviour is excellent and pupils of all ages greatly enjoy school. They are well motivated and are keen to learn. Attendance is above average. Pupils have a good understanding about how to lead healthy lifestyles and take part in regular exercise. The use of educational visits, especially the Year 6 residential excursion, promotes their social and cultural development exceptionally well. The school council provides opportunities for pupils to air their views and decisions made have a strong impact on school life. Many activities are provided to develop an understanding of the world of work. Pupils have very good basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills which give them a strong foundation for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and thoroughly prepared. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent. One pupil commented, 'They are strict at times but always fair'. Pupils say that the work is pitched at just the right level for everybody. 'It's definitely not too easy and it does push you on'. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully and show them how to improve. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the quantity and quality of work they produce.

In many lessons, the pace is brisk and pupils are challenged to improve their skills and understanding throughout. For example, in an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson, pupils were given interesting and challenging tasks and were highly motivated to complete them. However, there are occasions when teachers do not expect enough and so pupils do not achieve as much as they could if they were challenged to aim higher. Resources such as the new interactive whiteboards are used well to present teaching in an interesting way to motivate the pupils. In one excellent Reception lesson a ballet performance was shown in order to consolidate pupils' performance in a dance lesson. The teacher also used digital photographs of children following recipes to cook gingerbread men and wrote the child's own commentary underneath. The motivation to read their own words from the interactive whiteboard was powerful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, with some outstanding features. There is a clear focus on developing and extending literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The well-planned provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to make a good start to their school life and to make good progress. Throughout the school, the teachers plan a wide-ranging and interesting programme of work which is enhanced by visits made and visitors coming in to school. Enrichment days or weeks make a very good contribution to the pupils' personal development. The school is exploring ways to link subjects together to create exciting thematic approaches in order to make lessons even more stimulating. Provision for music is very good and an emphasis on developing pupils' sporting skills encourages them to develop healthy and safe lifestyles. The performing arts are well represented and pupils' work with the Young Shakespeare Company makes a major contribution to their enjoyment of drama and literature. A wide range of opportunities in sports, drama and music are offered through activities outside the school day. These are much appreciated by the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is secure and pupils report that they feel safe and comfortable, 'It's like one big family'. They know how to look after themselves and stay safe. They say that there is no bullying, 'It's never been heard of'. There is a good personal, social, health education and citizenship programme which includes lessons on drugs' awareness, sex education and relationships. Robust child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place and are understood and followed by all staff. Governors and staff carry out rigorous risk assessments and there is good attention to health and safety requirements. The school is developing accurate assessment systems so that it can provide more precise academic guidance. Pupils are confident that the adults will help them if they have a problem. Teaching assistants provide particularly good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils are full of praise and appreciation for the staff, 'The best thing about this school is the teachers'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The new headteacher has given a new impetus to the school's efforts to improve the quality of education. The senior management team share her commitment to raise standards. Already, she has made significant changes that have been well received by staff, parents and pupils. The strength of the leadership demonstrates that the school has good capacity to improve further. The school has developed good self-evaluation procedures which ensure the prioritised developments are the right ones to help the school improve. For example, it has identified that teachers need to measure the progress pupils make in literacy and numeracy. The school improvement plan is strongly focused on raising standards further and includes clear targets against which it can measure its success. Parents, pupils and governors are regularly consulted and their views carefully considered in this process. Governors, ably led by the chair, provide good support. Finances are managed well and the school provides good value for money.

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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	1
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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	1

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.

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	1
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

16 November 2006

Dear Children

St Andrew's C of E Primary School, Tower Hill, Much Hadham, Hertfordshire, SG10 6DL

What a super school! I thoroughly enjoyed my visit. Thank you for being so helpful and for telling me all about the school. I was only sitting on the friendship bench for two seconds when swarms of you came over to tell me what you think of the school.

You told me that the best thing about the school are the teachers because they are so kind and helpful but strict when they need to be. I agree with you but I think there is more to it than that. I think that the whole school community works so well together and that everybody keeps looking for ways to make the school even better. Your new headteacher has already made improvements and lots more are planned. The support staff work hard to help you. The school governors make good plans for improvement and the Rector takes great assemblies. The caretaker does all sorts of extra work behind the scenes and the school cook makes popular school dinners. The school council have made great improvements such as choosing new playground games and getting higher chairs for Year 5. The older ones love helping the little ones and you all, each one of you, want to do your best. Your parents give loads of help and raise lots of money for new equipment, like the interactive white boards. So you see it's a great school because everybody does their best to help.

You work hard and are good at reading, writing, mathematics and science. I saw some incredibly powerful writing in Year 6. Many of you play musical instruments and you are keen on sports. You have lots of talents. I would love to have seen the talent competition that the school council are organising.

There are just a few things to do to improve further. The school has quite rightly realised that teachers need to measure your progress in literacy and numeracy more precisely so that they can leap in with extra support if anybody isn't doing as well as they should. You said that lessons are interesting and fun and that some are brilliant. I think that there ought to be even more brilliant lessons.

I'm sure that there are exciting times ahead and I wish you every success in the future.

John Messer

Lead inspector