

St Alphege Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104092
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	308507
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ron Herd
Headteacher	Brian Curran
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Widney Manor Road Solihull B91 3JG
Telephone number	01217 042714
Fax number	01217 040522

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Alphege CE Junior School has an above average number of pupils. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is similar to most schools. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. When pupils start in the school, most have above average skills and abilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Alphege CofE Junior School is a good school and has many strengths. It has a very accurate view of its successes, where it needs to improve, and importantly, how it will do this. There is a very happy and stimulating learning ethos in the school and its promotion of different faiths and church links is outstanding. Standards are well above average and progress is good. Parents are almost unanimous in their positive views of the school, especially the excellent way their children are cared for and the quality of support for them, whatever their needs. Pupils are all safeguarded well.

The school uses every resource that is available in order to promote the well-being of the pupils, which makes a major contribution to their outstanding personal development and preparation for their future lives. Pupils greatly enjoy life in the school, feel well challenged, and appreciate the many different learning opportunities, especially the out of school activities that they are given. This shows in their excellent attitudes to learning, consistently high standards of behaviour and very high level of attendance.

The quality of teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. This guides the pupils towards achieving well and reaching high standards in their work. Teachers maintain pupils' interest and good achievement throughout the whole day, which is an improvement on the last inspection. They are ably helped by an exceptional team of well trained teaching assistants. The quality of teaching and learning is sometimes affected when large classes are working practically in classrooms that are too small for them.

The school has been successful in improving its use of data in the tracking of achievement, target setting and pupils' knowledge of their own learning. Its promotion of improvement is also shown by the successful way it is tackling the recent dip in standards and achievement of higher attaining pupils in writing. The school is well led and managed. The many strengths of the school owe much to the vision and positive leadership of the headteacher, who has created a highly effective team of staff who share his aspirations for the pupils. This gives the school a good capacity for future improvement and it provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in the writing of the more able pupils.
- Examine ways in which classrooms can be better used for the large classes of pupils, in order to improve the learning environment, particularly for practical work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are well above average and progress is good. Standards have been at this level for several years in mathematics and science, but in English in 2006, they dipped due to fewer than expected more able pupils reaching standards in writing at higher levels. The school leadership recognised this and after detailed analysis introduced a variety of strategies for improvement. As a result, standards in writing have risen in the present Years 4, 5 and 6 and the more able are once more consistently reaching standards well above average. This is because the school, using new assessment and tracking procedures, is far more aware of the progress of every pupil, and has introduced very effective intervention strategies for improvement.

In many other areas of the curriculum, such as art and information and communication technology (ICT), the work of pupils observed indicated standards consistently well above average. A combination of good teaching, pupils' good knowledge of their own learning and the exceptionally able support of teaching assistants, is helping all pupils to progress well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of a wide range of effective individual learning and support programmes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, attend very well and enthusiastically participate in after school activities. Behaviour is exemplary in school and in the playground. Pupils know how to stay safe and where to seek help if required. They understand about Internet safety. Pupils choose healthy options for lunch and say that 'teachers make sure that we have lots of exercise every day'. Pupils form positive relationships with each other and with staff. They talk to the 'Lunchtime Listener' and feel that there are many opportunities for them to discuss concerns if any arise. Pupils readily accept responsibility, such as helping to monitor exits and entrances during break or participating in the 'Playground Pals' initiative to help others socially. Through the active school council and class councils, pupils take decisions such as refurbishing of cloakrooms and raising funds for charities. They enjoy good involvement in the local community, especially through the school's strong links with the church.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. They are spiritually very aware, showing deep thought about life issues arising from the worship theme on light, for example, Christian ethos underpins all aspects of pupils' lives and is shared positively by pupils of all faiths in the school. They learn about other religions and cultures through different parts of the curriculum. By the time they leave school, pupils have developed into confident and mature young citizens who are very well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and there is some outstanding teaching. A major strength is the teachers' subject knowledge and their ability to provide work that is generally well matched to the needs of different groups in each class. They know what pupils need to learn next and how it is to be achieved. The good quality of marking enables pupils to improve their work and encourages dialogue with them. Teachers use varied resources effectively, such as interactive whiteboards, to motivate and involve the pupils in their learning. Time is generally well used to maximise learning, but occasionally the pace is slow, adversely affecting pupils' progress. This happens sometimes when large classes take time to organise and settle to their work in small classrooms, although teachers generally manage this well. The teaching assistants contribute exceptionally well in lessons, helping pupils to make good progress. Pupils are taught explicitly how to learn and how to organise their work. They self-evaluate their work successfully, recording what they have learned. Pupils enjoy their lessons, such as editing their writing or searching the school grounds for different habitats. Teachers and assistants ask questions skilfully, which require explanations and reasoning in return. Excellent relationships underpin the good learning seen in all classes, with pupils making consistently positive contributions to

lessons. The school is notable for the fact that all teachers, including the headteacher, also run clubs and extra-curricular activities of high quality in their own time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum captures the interest and imagination of most pupils who work hard as a result. The setting of pupils in ability groups in literacy and numeracy is used well most of the time to enable work to be appropriately matched to pupils' needs. There is now good provision for literacy as the school has taken positive action to improve pupils' writing, and for numeracy and ICT. The curriculum is broad and takes account of much more than just these subjects with very good emphasis on the performing arts and sport, both during the school day and through an exceptionally rich programme of out of school activities at lunchtime and after school. The opportunities for residential visits make a strong contribution to pupils' personal and social development, and during the inspection, pupils from Year 6 were greatly looking forward to a trip to North Wales where they were to experience some adventurous activities. There is a wide range of out of school clubs which pupils say they appreciate and enjoy. Some of the classrooms are rather small for the number of pupils and this tends to restrict their freedom to move around, and can slow the pace of learning, especially in practical subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents appreciate the high levels of care that the school provides for its pupils. All pupils feel valued and the principles of educational inclusion underpin everything the school does. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported by both teachers and classroom assistants who work very effectively to meet their needs. Pupils know that they can talk to their teachers and other adults about any problems they have. All adults are very caring and older pupils say they are very well looked after by the lunchtime supervisors and other staff.

The school, with effective support from the local authority, has developed very good systems relatively recently for tracking pupils' academic progress. This quickly identifies those pupils who are in need of additional intervention to iron out weaknesses and enables them to perform to their full potential. These systems have led to an improvement in the standards of writing, although there is work to do to further improve the achievement of the more able pupils in this subject. Most pupils can now recall and understand their targets well in English and mathematics. Through effective marking using symbols that they understand, pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. Nearly all can explain their targets for improvement, even the most recent arrivals in Year 3.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good quality of leadership and management in the school has some important strengths. The headteacher sets an outstanding example in his commitment to the school, his dedication to the shared Christian ethos evident everywhere, and his considerable drive to make the school 'as good as it can possibly be'. All staff feel greatly valued by him, he receives considerable accolades that the staff, many parents and the governing body give him for his work in the

school. He has led the school successfully through many changes in the last three years, including the appointment and excellent induction of many new teachers to the school. The newly appointed deputy headteacher and the restructured senior management team have made a good start and their effective teamwork shows considerable promise for the future development of the school.

The leadership and management of the teaching assistants is particularly effective, which enables them to make an outstanding contribution to learning and pupils' support in the school. All staff are involved in the accurate school self-evaluation of its performance which leads to effective development strategies. For example, there has been much improvement in the production and use of data about pupils who are not doing well enough and in the provision for gifted and talented pupils. Nearly all pupils now reach the consistently challenging targets that they are set. The management has also worked effectively to ensure that the principles of Every Child Matters are embedded in everything the school does. School governors make a good contribution to the management of the school, are consistently supportive and hold senior management to account, especially for achievement and standards.

Leaders have recognised that contrary to the usual very high standards in the school, there has been a dip in more able pupils' achievement in writing levels recently. Writing was prioritised for improvement and there is ample evidence to show that measures taken have enabled the writing of these pupils to improve rapidly throughout the school. The school uses its financial resources prudently in order to enhance learning and gives good value for money. The shared vision of all leaders in the school and good teamwork, give a good platform for continuing improvement.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 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	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Alphege CE Junior School, Solihull, B91 3JG

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school last week, which we greatly enjoyed. You were all very friendly, we liked hearing about how much you enjoy coming to school, and how everyone takes such good care of you. You also told us so much about all your exciting clubs, how well you get on with each other and all the adults in the school. You explained to us about how much exercise you take and your healthy eating. We are also glad that your parents are so pleased with how you do in school. We think there are many good things about your school such as:

- You reach high standards in mathematics and science, and you speak and listen very well.
- You work very hard, and your behaviour is nearly always excellent.
- You enjoy all your clubs and visits and sports activities.
- You have good teachers and class helpers, who guide and encourage you well in your learning.
- Your school is well led and managed and you really like your headteacher who has done so much for the school.

We think that, although your writing has been improving recently, in the next few months, helped by your teachers, you will need to work even harder so that all of you are writing as well as you possibly can. We think you will be able to do this if you, continue to improve as you have shown us already and work towards the targets you are set in your work.

We also hope that you will not be so crowded in some of your small classrooms, although we know that this could take time to organise. In spite of this, keep behaving and learning as well as you do.

Best wishes to you all and keep enjoying your school life.

Rod Braithwaite Lead Inspector

Annex B

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Lead Inspector