

St Aldhelm's Church of England Voluntary Aided Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113830
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	311390
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Barron

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	467
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Batty
Headteacher	Helena Seale
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Winston Avenue Branksome Poole BH12 1PG
Telephone number	01202 715100
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Age group	4–12
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large two-form entry school. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average whilst the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is rising, but it is still below the national average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the school's two Reception classes. The school has gained several recent awards, including Healthy School Status, Sports' Activemark, Football Association Chartermark and the Financial Management Standards in Schools award.

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. It has a welcoming and inclusive ethos and provides a good education for pupils, preparing them well for the next stage of their education.

It is well led and managed by a dedicated headteacher who has ensured that staff, governors and parents share her vision of raising standards through improving achievement and providing pupils with a stimulating and enjoyable curriculum. The school has increased its effectiveness since the last inspection by developing systems to regularly check and measure its performance in order to implement improvements where needed. This has been a key factor in improving pupils' achievement and demonstrates that the school has made good progress and has a good capacity to improve in future.

Children enter their Reception Year with skill standards broadly typical for their age, although aspects of their language development, in particular writing skills, are below expectations. They get off to a good start and achieve well because good teaching caters effectively for their needs, regardless of their different abilities. Consistently good teaching throughout the rest of the school enables pupils to achieve well in all year groups so that, by the end of Year 7, standards are above the national average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number of pupils whose first language is not English make good progress because of the effective level of support they receive.

Pupils are keen and eager to do well and describe their school as a happy and friendly place where adults make them feel wanted. They really enjoy all aspects of their education and describe school using words such as 'exciting', 'fun' and 'great'. The quality of their personal development and well-being is good and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour, outstanding regard for the safety and welfare of others and excellent understanding of the need to stay safe and adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils have a good community spirit and take on responsibilities very seriously. However, whilst their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, their appreciation of the multicultural nature of modern British society is not as well developed as other aspects of their cultural education.

The broad and balanced curriculum is well designed to make learning interesting and enjoyable for pupils. The good quality of care, guidance and support contributes much to pupils' sense of well-being. However, the quality of teachers' marking varies and does not consistently provide pupils with effective guidance on how to improve their work.

The school makes a satisfactory contribution to promoting community cohesion and this is evident in the way pupils work and play well together while accepting each other's differences. The curriculum is used effectively to help pupils' value diversity and promote shared values. Pupils talk confidently and enthusiastically about their involvement with the local community and the school's links to a primary school in Korea. However, they are less confident when discussing how they share common values with people living in other parts of Britain who are from cultural backgrounds different from their own.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception Year classrooms are colourful and vibrant places which provide children with stimulating learning environments where they feel safe and well looked after. The quality of children's personal development and well-being is good. Children soon develop positive attitudes

to school and settle happily into new routines. The broad and balanced curriculum ensures that children are provided with a wide range of activities covering all areas of learning while focusing on providing them with regular opportunities to develop their literacy skills. A secure outdoor area is used well to help children build up the skills associated with outdoor play when the weather is fine. However, the outdoor covered area is very small and this severely limits opportunities for outdoor activities during inclement weather.

Good leadership and management ensure that teachers and teaching assistants work well with each other and that lessons provide children with opportunities to work both independently and with adult direction. Recording of children's progress is thorough and used well when planning future work and to ensure that children requiring extra help with learning are provided with a good level of care, guidance and support. This is a key factor in ensuring children achieve and attain well and sometimes exceed the standards they are expected to reach in all areas of learning, including their language development, by the time they enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers' marking consistently provides pupils with effective guidance about how to improve their work.
- Increase pupils' awareness and understanding of the multicultural nature of modern British society today.
- Improve outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and provide children with the facilities they need to develop the skills associated with outdoor play during periods of inclement weather.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in all year groups because good teaching builds effectively on previous learning. The school's systems for tracking and analysing pupils' progress have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now used well to identify those who need extra help or who are performing less well than they should be. This has, for example, successfully led to the recent improvement in pupils' achievement in mathematics and the improvements in the progress of the more able pupils in writing. As a result, standards have risen since the last inspection. They are above average in Year 7 and also in Year 6, where pupils are presently on course to meet the school's appropriately challenging targets in the forthcoming national tests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are very friendly and polite and their behaviour is excellent. They feel very safe and know there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. They really enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. Some pupils even admit that they try to come to school even when they are clearly ill. As one Year 4 pupil simply put it, 'It's the best school ever'.

Attitudes to learning are outstanding. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite subjects, especially music and sports. They appreciate that the school council gives them a voice in decision-making. They are also aware of the importance of their participation in fundraising for both local and international charities. Their good progress in developing skills in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT), together with their good

understanding of individual and collective responsibility, means they are prepared well for future life. However, whilst the quality of pupil's spiritual, moral and social development is strong, aspects of their cultural education are not as well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching ensures pupils make good progress. Lessons are well structured and have clear learning intentions. Class teachers work well with effective teaching assistants to ensure that all pupils, regardless of their needs or abilities, receive the help they require in order to make good progress. Teachers deploy a variety of methods, for example using interactive whiteboards effectively, to make learning interesting. Pupils say they enjoy lessons, especially when they involve practical activities. As a result, from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, pupils develop good attitudes to learning and work hard. However, on very rare occasions, the pace of learning sometimes slackens and a very small minority of pupils lose a little interest for a short time in what is going on.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been designed to give pupils opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. Provision for both music and sport is strong and the school provides pupils with a very diverse programme of enrichment activities, including well-attended after-school clubs, which pupils say they enjoy taking part in. Pupils talk with pride about the quality of the school orchestra whilst older pupils look forward to the annual skiing trips the school organises. The good standard of pupils' work on display provides clear evidence that pupils' achievement is not just restricted to test results. Good planning and provision for personal, social and health education ensures that pupils are well aware of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. Provision for pupils needing extra help with learning is good and helps these pupils to make good progress. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness and understanding of the wide range of cultures in modern British society today are limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a very good level of pastoral care and support for pupils and this is the basis for their good personal development. Parents appreciate the caring way the school looks after their children and are confident that there is always someone on hand for their child to approach with a problem. Child protection procedures meet current requirements, and health and safety routines and risk assessments are robust. Good induction and transfer arrangements help pupils settle quickly into new routines and vulnerable pupils receive an effective level of care and support. The school has developed and implemented good procedures to assess and track pupils' progress since the last inspection and uses these well to set individual pupils challenging targets for improvement. However, the quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent. In several year groups, it is very good but in some classes, it does not always indicate to pupils how and where improvements to their work can be made.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good quality of leadership and management is reflected in the thoroughness of the school's self-evaluation. The headteacher and staff have implemented many improvements since the last inspection. They have been well supported in this by the governing body, which offers a realistic level of challenge to the school and takes its duties seriously. Individual governors play an active role in school life and are involved in all major decisions. Links with external agencies and partnerships with other educational institutions are good and support pupils' learning well. The school is very well resourced for subjects such as music and sports, and uses these very effectively to enhance learning.

The school's work in promoting community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has successfully ensured that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and has built up effective links with the local community, which it uses well to develop pupils' understanding of not only different types of people, but also of shared community values. However, pupils' appreciation of the diversity of cultures and beliefs in the wider national community is not as well developed as their understanding of the range of cultures and beliefs in other countries.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	2
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

8 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Aldhelm's Church of England Voluntary Aided Combined School, Poole BH12 1PG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. Everyone was very friendly, and the other inspectors and I quickly realised why you like your school so much. We thought you were very polite and we enjoyed talking to you and seeing you all working hard in lessons. Your parents believe this is a good school and we agree with them. Here are some of the things we particularly like about your school:

- Your school gives you a good start to your education.
- You really enjoy everything about school.
- Your personal development is good and you have an excellent idea of why it is important to eat healthily, stay safe and exercise as often as you can.
- You have an interesting and stimulating curriculum.
- The quality of care and support you receive from the school is good.
- You all behave exceptionally well and you are a credit to your school.
- Your headteacher, staff and school governors are working well to make sure that your school continues to improve in the future. We believe your headteacher and teachers can make your school even better. We have asked them to do the following:
 - Make sure that when your teachers mark your work, they always give you ideas about how you can improve it.
 - Help you to find out more about the customs and traditions of people living in this country whose cultural backgrounds from yours.
 - Improve the Reception children's outdoor area so that they can work and play outside even when the weather is poor.

You can help your school to improve by continuing to work hard.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Michael Barron

Lead inspector