

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Marks Tey

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115081
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311819
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	170
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	Mr Malcolm Bailey
Headteacher	Mrs Lelia Berkeley
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Mandeville Road Marks Tey Colchester Essex CO6 1HL
Telephone number	01206210638

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2008
Inspection number	311819

Fax number

01206212846

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school serves pupils mainly from the local neighbourhood. Nearly all come from White British backgrounds and none are at the early stages of learning English. Far fewer pupils than in most schools have learning difficulties and/or disabilities although a higher than average number have a statement of special educational needs.

There is one Reception class catering for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). There are two intakes a year, in September and January. This is a new development. Prior to last year, children started at the beginning of the term in which they became five, that is, three times a year. Attainment on entry to Reception is broadly typical for the children's age although it does vary from year to year.

The school has won a number of awards, including Healthy Schools, Investors in People, Effective Parent Partnership and Active Mark. There has been a high turnover of staff over the past few years.

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 that provides good value for money. It has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to maintain this momentum. The school benefits greatly from the dedicated leadership of the headteacher who has systematically evaluated all aspects of the school's work to highlight the correct priorities for improvement. Despite the high turnover of staff, standards have risen in recent years, reflecting the impetus to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Achievement is good and standards are above average. In Year 2 for example, standards have risen from average to above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because children receive a secure start to their learning in the Reception class and the good teaching in Years 1 and 2 successfully builds on this. Pupils continue to make good gains in their learning in Key Stage 2 because the teaching is generally good and the curriculum really engages their interest. Recent improvements to the curriculum have made it more relevant to pupils' needs and interests and have provided valuable opportunities for pupils to develop literacy, numeracy and computer skills in different subjects.

Assessment systems are much better than at the last inspection. They enable staff to track progress more carefully and set clear targets for improvement. They also identify where pupils are underachieving so that they can intervene quickly to help pupils catch up. Computer programs are sometimes used to help pupils improve aspects of literacy for example. Pupils enjoy these and show good levels of motivation.

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. They greatly enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. Welfare, care and guidance are good. Adults respect and value the pupils, who develop confidence, self-esteem and self-discipline as a result. Pupils' behaviour is good. They know how to keep safe in and out of school. Most respond well to the school's initiatives about how to keep fit and healthy by taking regular exercise and eating a nutritious diet. They work hard and play well together. Pupils willingly take on extra responsibilities, for example as members of the school council and as librarians. They support local and national charities and participate annually in Local Democracy Week, when they share their views about community developments with a local councillor. By the time they leave, most pupils have acquired good academic, social and personal skills which will stand them in good stead for the future.

Parental questionnaires showed considerable concern about the high turnover of staff but the headteacher has worked hard to ensure that this has not hindered pupils' progress. She has supported and guided new teachers very well. This has helped them to become skilled and valuable members of the St Andrew's team. However, they have yet to develop their management roles across the school to support the headteacher's drive to raise standards still further. The headteacher and governors have an accurate picture of school performance but the plans for improvement lack rigour and clear targets by which they can check and evaluate success.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in their learning and development and, by the end of Reception, most reach nationally expected levels and some exceed them. This is because of good teaching, which helps them move on confidently in their learning. Staff nurture them well and this helps them feel safe and secure. Children settle quickly into school and approach all activities with

great enthusiasm. There was great excitement for example, about going to the hall to practise firework dances after Bonfire Night, and they were equally as thrilled to go the library to choose and share books together. Although still very young, many of them understand what they need to do to improve their work. This is because of an innovative system that provides easily understood daily targets for individual children. This helps them to take responsibility for their learning as well as improve particular skills such as handwriting. Although there is an area for outside activities, it is underdeveloped and does not provide enough opportunities for children to develop in all areas of their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the roles of middle managers to more actively support the headteacher's drive to improve standards.
- Strengthen school development planning to include clear measurable goals for improvement and interim goals by which the school can evaluate ongoing progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Following a declining trend, standards reached in the Year 2 national tests have been above average for the past three years. Far more pupils than in most schools reached the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics. The school is now focusing on providing higher levels of challenge in writing to ensure that its more able pupils reach similarly high standards.

Standards gained by Year 6 pupils in the national tests in English and mathematics for Year 6 pupils have been mainly above average over the past few years. A sharp rise in science results in 2007 reflected the impact of the school's work to improve the range of practical activities offered to pupils. Results in the most recent national tests suggest similarly good achievement for the pupils involved. Standards in information and communication technology are above average because pupils receive many valuable opportunities to develop their skills in the computer suite and in class. Pupils who find learning difficult are well supported by teachers and assistants and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils work together very well and are polite and respectful to each other and adults. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and many enjoy the sports and activity clubs on offer at the school. School lunches are nutritious. Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy school a great deal and are very enthusiastic about the newly introduced curriculum. They know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Behaviour is very good. Pupils trust staff to sort out any problems although they say such incidents are rare. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school in many ways. They run lunch-time clubs and act as monitors and helpers. There is an active school council and pupils are trained to work as 'argue-busters' at playtimes. Older pupils take responsibility for organising the Christmas concert. Pupils' good academic progress and well-developed social skills provide them with a secure base for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most lessons are taught well. Strong relationships between teachers, assistants and pupils promote good attitudes to learning and effective discipline. Lessons are well planned and include a good range of practical activities to engage pupils fully in their learning. A Year 5 technology lesson for instance, involved the pupils in designing and building a box with a tamper-proof lid that could contain fireworks. The pupils worked diligently on the task, discussing various strategies with each other and successfully developing measuring skills and their knowledge of angles and shape.

Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive valuable support from teachers and assistants, who know their needs well and provide sensitive encouragement and guidance. However, very occasionally, the work set does not challenge the more able pupils sufficiently and they waste time practising things they can already do. This hinders their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The recently reviewed curriculum provides a good range of interesting and stimulating activities that pupils really enjoy. 'Teachers are trying to make lessons more fun!' noted one pupil. Topics such as 'Explosions' and 'Winter Wonderland' add excitement to learning. Pupils see the relevance of their literacy work when, for example, they write and illustrate stories about 'The Snowman' using computers. There is an appropriate emphasis on teaching literacy and numeracy, and pupils have many opportunities to practise these skills in other subjects. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development well. Year 1 pupils learned for instance about the dangers of electricity during their science lesson when they worked in groups to design safety posters. Enrichment opportunities are good, especially those for music and sport, where pupils participate in local competitions and festivals. Senior leaders are monitoring the new curriculum carefully to ensure appropriate coverage of all subjects and making amendments as necessary.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for children well. Arrangements for safeguarding children meet current requirements. Staff know child protection procedures and what they should do if they have any concerns. Governors undertake regular audits to check that the building is safe. A 'well-being mentor' provides a valuable service for pupils and parents, giving advice and support when required. Effective partnerships with the education welfare officer, Church and secondary school support pupils' academic and personal development well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good levels of help and advice. Their needs are carefully identified and programmes implemented to help them take the next steps in their learning. Academic guidance is good. Pupils receive useful advice from teachers about how to improve their work. Teachers set targets for improvement for every pupil. Most pupils are aware of these although a few are less certain and this restricts their development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A key factor in the school's good improvement since the last inspection is in the strength of the work of the headteacher. She has a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses and has worked hard to make the necessary improvements. She is ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, appointed only last year. Middle managers are developing their roles but are not yet fully involved in analysing standards and progress and in monitoring teaching and learning. The school improvement plan provides a useful guide to the way in which the school will move forward. However, it lacks clear indicators to check the progress of the plans and to evaluate their effectiveness. The school promotes good links within the local and wider community, with regular visits from secondary school staff to support, for example, French teaching for Year 5 and 6 pupils. Links with schools further afield are developing well including those who have a more diverse range of backgrounds and cultures. Good relationships with the local Church help to promote strong moral and spiritual values. Staff take great care to ensure that pupils have equal opportunities to be involved in school life. Pupils with statements of special educational needs for example, are nurtured and encouraged to take a full part in everything the school offers. Governors take an active role in monitoring school performance. Consequently, they have a secure understanding of the school's work, which enables them to make effective budget decisions.

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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	3
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?	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

17 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Andrew's CE VC Primary School, Marks Tey, Colchester, CO6 1HL

Thank you all very much for welcoming me and the other inspector to your school recently. We really enjoyed watching you working in lessons and chatting with you in the playground and around the school. You gave us a great deal of information that was extremely useful in helping us to reach our conclusions.

You go to a good school. The teaching is good and helps you make good progress. All the adults look after you and keep you safe in school. You told us how you like sport, because it keeps you fit and healthy. We were pleased to find out that you enjoy school lunches, which are really nutritious. However, packed lunches sometimes contain crisps and chocolate biscuits, which are not really good for you! You told us that you like the new curriculum because it made learning more fun. We could see this in lessons, because you were really involved and showed great enthusiasm for learning.

We were particularly impressed with the way that you behave well and work hard in lessons. You show good levels of respect for each other and for adults in the school.

We have asked the teachers to improve a few things to help you do even better at school. We think that some of the teachers with special responsibilities should be more involved in checking what is going on in classrooms and sharing some of their special skills and knowledge. We have also asked the headteacher and governors to plan more carefully for improvement and to make sure they check how the plans are going and if they've been successful.

I know you will want to help them with these tasks and the best way you can do that is to keep working hard and behaving well. My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs M Summers

Lead inspector