

White Notley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115111
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311837
Inspection date	24 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev John Hall
Headteacher	Mrs Penny Smith
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002
School address	Vicarage Avenue White Notley Witham Essex CM8 1RZ
Telephone number	01376583376
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector in one day. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and had a particular focus on how effectively the pupils make progress in writing and whether standards are as high as they could be; if the curriculum is planned creatively in the Foundation Stage and whether teaching, throughout the school, challenges pupils effectively; how well leaders monitor pupils' achievement, including the more able and whether the Christian ethos and links with the local community have a positive impact on pupils' personal development. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, teachers, pupils and chair of the governors, observations of teaching and analysis of school data on standards, pupils' work on display and in books, documents and parents' questionnaires.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. Nearly all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who find learning more difficult or who have a statement of special educational need is below the national average. The levels of knowledge that pupils start at school with is in line with national expectations for four year olds. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school part way through the taught year is significant and is higher than in most schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

White Notley Church of England Primary is an effective school and gives good value for money. It has a few outstanding features. Pupils of all abilities are welcomed into the school and integrated quickly into school life. This is partly because of the application of the Christian beliefs, which are so highly valued by the leadership of the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their understanding of our multicultural society is particularly good. For example, pupils value others' beliefs very thoughtfully and have an extremely wide understanding of religious symbols all over the world.

All staff offer pupils a dedicated and excellent level of pastoral support and care. This ensures that pupils develop into mature and responsible young people. Older pupils look after younger ones caringly. For example, some Year 6 pupils spend time at the beginning of lunchtime hearing younger ones read. Pupils' personal development is good, ensuring that they behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They adopt healthy lifestyles particularly well because they are encouraged to eat well and take regular exercise. The school works carefully to safeguard pupils and procedures meet requirements. Staff help pupils to understand the dangers in and outside school and so they are well aware of how to keep themselves safe. The school's work is outstanding in uniting the community and involving members in school life. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to community. For instance, they are involved exceptionally well in working with local people in many festivals throughout the year. Not all pupils are clear about what targets they are working towards in the first half of the autumn term because they are not encouraged sufficiently to use their existing targets from last term.

A significant strength of the school is the excellent partnership that leaders and staff have with parents. This ensures that pupils' individual needs are always at the centre of developments made to the school. Virtually every parent who returned a questionnaire was very positive about the school's work. One said, 'We have only praise for the teaching, support and office staff - all of whom are friendly and very approachable. They work extremely hard together and have created a happy and secure environment.'

Good teaching ensures that pupils make good gains in their learning in lessons. Teachers challenge them well and explain carefully what they have to do in lessons. Effective teaching methods are used and so pupils see the relevance of their learning. Criteria against which pupils can evaluate their success in lessons are consistently on display and so it is easy for them to measure their achievements part way through or at the end of lessons.

The school's leadership places a great deal of importance on maintaining high standards. When pupils start school, their levels of knowledge are in line with expectations for four year olds. They make good progress and standards are above those expected by the end of the Reception year. Pupils' achievement is good in Years 1 and 2. As a result, pupils attain standards that are significantly above average in Year 2 assessments in reading, writing and mathematics. Effective support for those pupils who have learning difficulties allows them to make good progress. The good use of individual education plans mean that these pupils work towards specific and measurable targets. Pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well in Years 3 to 6, even though a significant proportion joins or leaves part way through the taught year. The school uses year group targets effectively to raise standards and this year it met challenging targets. Planning for the more able pupils consistently challenges them and this enables a significant proportion to attain well. In 2007 assessments half of them attained above expected

levels of skill in reading and mathematics and nearly three-quarters in science. There is good preparation for secondary school and their future lives, due to the key skills that pupils learn whilst at the school. Standards are above average by Year 6 in reading, mathematics and science and are average in writing. The school has rightly identified improving writing standards as an area for further development and is already working on it.

Support and guidance about pupils' academic work is good. The school uses assessment activities well. Pupils' work is evaluated thoroughly in many areas of learning. Teachers assess some of the pupils' work together with them so that they agree the levels of attainment. Pupils receive personal targets in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the school does not always use pupils' targets effectively in the first few weeks of the autumn term.

A good curriculum and range of activities are celebrated well in school displays. Pupils thoroughly enjoy many of the exciting activities planned for them and attendance is above national averages. Pupils talked extremely enthusiastically about many things that they do at school. They say they really like art, 'Celebration Assembly' and reading groups. One says, 'I like mathematics because it makes our brains better.' They have good opportunities to use information and communication technology. The school is always looking for ways to improve and so is refining its planning so that it can create more projects where several types of skills are taught at one time.

Very good leadership from the headteacher and governors and use of self-evaluation have brought about successful improvements since the last inspection. The tracking of pupils' progress more clearly identifies those who are not making enough progress. Thorough monitoring of all groups of pupils, including the more able, leads to careful intervention. These strategies, combined with the pupils' personal qualities ensure that they develop the key skills they had not fully grasped. The school has enriched pupils' days with greater use of specialist teaching in physical education, music and French. Subject leaders work well to develop their areas of learning and the school is in a good position to continue to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Effective leadership and management mean that pupils have a good start to their education. Children settle quickly into school life because of very good links with parents. They behave well and learn to cooperate successfully because staff guide and manage them skilfully. Good support for children from minority ethnic groups allows them to achieve well. Children make good progress because teaching uses practical methods effectively. For example, children used their sense of touch very competently when they were learning to describe the texture of many natural objects.

Activities keep them interested and allow them to develop skills of independence consistently. Children are equipped well for the next stage of education because of the levels of literacy, numeracy and personal skills that they develop in the Reception class. Parents find out regularly about their child's progress. Careful planning means that pupils take part in a range of creative activities but the plans for the outside learning area do not always link well to work inside the classroom.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise writing standards to at least the above average levels of reading, mathematics and science.

- Further develop the use of targets for pupils so that they are used effectively throughout the year.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	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 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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of White Notley Church of England Voluntary Controlled School, Witham, Essex,
CM8 1RZ

Thank you for helping me to find out about your school. I enjoyed watching lessons and talking to you. It was interesting to talk to your teachers and see an assembly. I really enjoyed your singing. You are lucky to attend such a happy and friendly school. Good things about your school include the facts that:

- you gain above average standards in Years 2 and 6
- you work hard in lessons and behave well
- your headteacher has really good ideas about ways to improve the school
- teaching is good and your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting
- you are encouraged very effectively to lead healthy lives
- an excellent partnership is in place between the school and your parents
- teachers and staff care for your personal needs excellently.

I have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. I hope that you will help teachers by listening to them carefully. The most important things are:

- improving your skills in writing by Year 6 to at least the same good levels you achieve in reading, mathematics and science
- making sure that your targets are used well at the start of the autumn term.

Keep working hard at White Notley Church of England VC Primary School.

Jackie Cousins

Lead inspector