

# St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121475
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314002
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lesley Clark

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	35
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fr Michael Cartwright
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Maureen Skinner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 June 2004
<b>School address</b>	Station Road Ampleforth York North Yorkshire YO62 4DG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01439 788357
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This very small Church of England primary school serves the village of Ampleforth. A small number of pupils come from other nearby villages. The Nursery class also serves St Benedict's Roman Catholic Primary School to which most children transfer at the start of the Reception year. All pupils are of White British heritage and come from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. None has a statement of educational need. The school confederated with Hovingham Primary School in January 2008 and shares the same headteacher. This followed a period of acting headship and significant staffing changes during the previous two years. The school is an Investor in People and holds the Activemark award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Primary School gives pupils a satisfactory education. The recent confederation with Hovingham Primary School is a major strength. Parents comment on how their children are, 'really enjoying school since the confederation' and pupils' eyes lit up when they talked about the interesting things they had done with the other school such as visiting a mosque in Bradford. In their words, 'People learn more now because they're having fun as well.' The headteacher has made a big impact in a very short time. This is most noticeable in the Foundation Stage where provision is now good. Her accurate assessment of the improvements needed is balanced by encouragement and support for her less experienced staff and so everyone works together well as a team.

Standards are close to average. From broadly average starting points pupils achieve satisfactorily. Results in national tests show that pupils generally reach the levels expected of them. However, standards in writing are below average and pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge and understanding. More effective assessment systems, introduced in January 2008, enabled the school to pinpoint these weaknesses. Pupils' progress is now picking up because they are being given the extra help they need. At the same time, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as distinct from those who had slipped behind in their literacy, were accurately identified and given suitable additional support. These pupils are now making satisfactory progress as a result.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with strengths in the way younger children, in Key Stage 1, are taught, with planned opportunities to learn independently and discover things for themselves. This means they become curious learners, for example writing down questions to which they want to know the answer, such as: 'Why does the sea move?' Older pupils' learning is more variable because teachers' explanations lack clarity and expectations of what pupils should learn are uneven. Marking tends to identify weaknesses yet does not give clear indications as to precisely how pupils should improve their work. This results in pupils tending to repeat mistakes. They are then slow to settle to writing tasks because they see them as a chore. Improved planning is ensuring that pupils are beginning to make up some of the gaps in their mathematical knowledge but there is still some way to go. Teachers set potentially challenging targets in both English and mathematics. Pupils do not use these as well as they should because they have not been involved in setting them or gauging whether they have met them or not.

The school gives suitable support and guidance to pupils and they are well cared for. Consequently, pupils want to come to school and their attendance is generally good. They enjoy playing with their friends and see them as a first line of support should anything be troubling them. They have a satisfactory understanding of why it is important to lead healthy lives and almost all of them choose to eat the healthy school lunches. Pupils play energetically and enjoy the different extra-curricular clubs such as the gardening club and also the drama club shared with their partner school. Their personal development is satisfactory with strengths in the recently formed school council, which is flourishing. Behaviour is satisfactory. While pupils can behave well, they are sometimes slow to settle to work and inclined to fuss. Limited opportunities for older pupils to take responsibility and work independently are drawbacks.

The satisfactory curriculum is being strengthened through links with the partner school. Teaching is beginning to make interesting connections between subjects, which is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall.

Despite considerable strengths in the way the school is being led by the headteacher with the good support of the governing body, other members of staff have yet to take on responsibilities for leading and managing subjects or areas of the curriculum. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, successfully overcoming the recent staffing difficulties. Given the rate of improvements and the successful impact on pupils' learning in the last six months the school clearly demonstrates its good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

From broadly average starting points children get off to a good start in the Nursery class where well thought out resources both indoors and outdoors promote children's learning through cooperation and imaginative play. A strong feature is the use of large-scale materials such as logs, planks of wood and plastic crates, which children use in a variety of creative ways. For example, one group were rolling children inside a large plastic drum, pretending it was a washing machine. Teaching is good in both the Nursery and Reception classes because adults understand how to play with young children and take their lead from them. The result is lively, talkative children who want to learn. Most are working securely within expected levels by the end of the Reception year. Resources in the Reception class are more limited, especially outdoors. However, good arrangements for children to use the nursery outside area in the afternoons as well as involving children in making large-scale structures such as a petrol pump or creating their own seaside on a large table are ample compensations indoors. Children are well cared for and the provision is well led and managed.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in writing and ensure that pupils make up the gaps in their mathematical knowledge.
- Ensure that teachers give clear explanations, set suitable learning objectives and that their marking encourages yet tells pupils exactly what they need to do to improve their work.
- Give older pupils more opportunities to learn independently and to take responsibility for checking their learning.
- Develop the role of the subject or curriculum leaders so as to accelerate pupils' progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory. Results in national tests fluctuate widely because year groups are very small. This makes comparisons from year to year difficult. For example, there were no Year 6 pupils in 2007 and there are none in Year 2 in 2008. Standards are generally close to average but below average in writing. The school does not always meet its targets because pupils have gaps in their knowledge, especially in mathematics. Standards in reading and science are consistently better. This is because the school has an effective reading programme whereby children across the school read together in groups according to their ability. A strong focus on learning through practical investigations aids their progress in science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are beginning to catch up after a period of slow progress because work is now much better matched to their needs.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, with strengths in their spiritual awareness because of the school's close links with the neighbouring church. Pupils have a good sense of their local community; their understanding of the wider community is developing well following the confederation. For example, pupils spoke animatedly about a French day that the two schools shared where they sampled French food and worked together in groups making 'Eiffel towers out of newspaper'. Limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their learning have led to a lack of pride in presentation and to pupils making careless mistakes, especially among older pupils. They are prepared satisfactorily for their future lives. The school council is respected by pupils and represents their views well.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Pupils learn satisfactorily. Younger pupils' learning benefits from a great deal of individual attention as well as the opportunities presented to find things out for themselves. Older pupils learn well when a subject, such as art or science, interests them because they enjoy learning through doing. Strengths in teaching include good opportunities for pupils to talk purposefully with a partner and good learning resources for pupils to use or to consult. Areas for improvement include making sure that questions extend pupils of different ability, that explanations are clear and that the balance of lessons is weighted towards pupils learning and doing rather than teachers talking. Marking is satisfactory but does not always encourage learners or help them to improve their work sufficiently well.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum makes satisfactory provision for the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Current planning of a new curriculum, shared between the two schools and designed to promote learning through making connections between subjects, is developing well. The school makes good provision for physical education and for pupils in Key Stage 2 to learn French. The range of educational visits and visitors to school is expanding rapidly and contributing well to pupils' increased enjoyment of learning. These have yet to have an appreciable impact on standards and achievement.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school looks after its pupils well and procedures to ensure their safety meet current government guidelines. Procedures to check pupils' progress are satisfactory and are now used well to highlight underachievement and ensure that pupils get the help they need. There is satisfactory provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; their recent individual education plans indicate clear steps to ensure improvement. These plans, even though it is still early days, are having a sound impact on pupils' progress. Provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory but developing apace as the school expands pupils' social

and cultural development through shared enterprises with their partner school. Parents are pleased their children are 'catered for as individuals.'

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher has accomplished a great deal in a short time through good management and shrewd assessment of what needs improving first. This has effectively raised teachers' morale, made teaching more effective and so eradicated underachievement. It is a measure of her success that although she spends half the week in the partner school, pupils' perception is that she is always in theirs. The school rightly judges the effect of its work to be satisfactory. However, the inspection judges the Foundation Stage to be good because the provision in Reception now matches that in the already successful Nursery. Governance is good. Governors ask penetrating questions to ensure continual improvement and their support for the confederation is a positive step in the school's development. Despite the good features of leadership and management, these aspects are satisfactory because the middle layer of management lacks the necessary skills to help raise standards and improve achievement. The school is aware of this and has plans to rectify this weakness, but it is too soon to see any improvement in this respect.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

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**Annex B**

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School,  
York, YO62 4DG

Thank you for talking to me and telling me about your school. I enjoyed looking at your work and seeing you learn. I found it very helpful to hear about how much your school has changed since Christmas and how much you enjoy the things you do with Hovingham School. Your school is giving you a satisfactory education. This means that it does some things well and there are other things that it needs to improve. Your headteacher knows exactly what to do to make your school better and this is why so many changes have taken place recently. Your school takes good care of you. Your teachers now know which areas some of you have been struggling with because they have improved the way they check your progress. Governors are helpful and everyone has great plans for the autumn term to make lessons more interesting for all of you. This is already working well in the Foundation Stage where provision is now good.

This is what I have asked your school to do next.

- Standards in writing are not as good as they should be and some of you have too many gaps in your mathematical knowledge so this is the first area I have asked your school to improve.
- Sometimes teachers do not explain clearly what they want you to do so I want teachers to give clear explanations, set suitable learning objectives and use marking to encourage you and also help you to improve your work.
- Some older pupils have a very relaxed attitude in lessons and do not always concentrate as well as they should. There is a lack of pride in the presentation of your work and careless mistakes are being made. I have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities to learn on your own and to involve you in checking your learning. You can help by trying your best all the time.
- Lastly, I have asked that all of the teachers in your school take on some responsibilities so that they help your headteacher lead and manage the school. This way everyone will work together and if anyone is away the school will still continue to do well.

Thank you once again for a very pleasant visit. I wish you all the very best for the future.