

St Aldhelm's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123753
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314707
Inspection date	5 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adam Savery
Headteacher	Joy Mounter
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Chelynch Park Doulting Shepton Mallet BA4 4PL
Telephone number	01749 880376
Fax number	01749 880166

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of actions taken to eradicate low-level disruptive behaviour; the effectiveness of systems to track pupils' progress and how these systems are used to decide on actions to raise standards, particularly in writing; and whether clear direction has been set for improvement by the headteacher, senior staff and governors to raise standards and drive the school forward.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school serves the local village and the surrounding community. More than half the pupils come from outside the village. The attainment of children when they enter the Reception class is broadly in line with the levels expected but the level of development of early writing skills is usually a little lower. The headteacher took up her appointment in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school providing a sound education for its pupils. The school's Christian values are central to its ethos and staff and governors are striving to fulfil their commitment to the all-round development of the pupils. The school has had a troubled year and some parents quite justifiably have had concerns about the disruption caused to their children by the many changes of teachers, particularly in Year 1. However, most parents are also appreciative of the swift and positive way in which the headteacher has addressed this problem. The advent of a new headteacher has resulted in a renewed sense of purpose amongst staff and governors, and has re-established the confidence of parents. Observations such as, 'The new head very much seems to have her finger on the pulse' and, 'Positive changes are already being made', were typical of many comments received.

The good provision in the Reception class ensures that children get an effective start to their schooling, enabling them to make good progress. Progress in the rest of the school has been patchy, particularly in Years 3 to 5. This means that pupils in Year 6 have had a lot of catching up to do. Although this problem is now being remedied, there is still more to be done. The school has focused on improving the standards in writing and this is proving to be successful. However, spelling is not as good as it should be. The school has taken positive action to remedy this and has introduced well-constructed programmes to teach specific spelling skills. This is already having a positive impact on writing lower down the school. However, in Year 6 particularly, although the quality of writing content is high and good imagery is used to support original and interesting ideas, spelling is a weaker element. This prevents some pupils from achieving the higher National Curriculum Level 5. In mathematics, pupils have too little scope to solve problems and record their findings. Overall, however, standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory and they receive appropriate support in class and in small groups.

The school is currently undergoing a full review of its curriculum in order to make it more relevant to the pupils and sustain their motivation to learn. This is entirely appropriate as, although it meets requirements, it does not currently identify opportunities for the development of themes and topics which will appeal to boys in particular. In addition, opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills across subjects are not identified. A good range of visits and visitors and after-school clubs, as well as opportunities to take part in activities such as the 'Children's Parliament', all serve to broaden pupils' experiences and enrich their learning effectively.

The pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. They say they would not want to change anything. Most are considerate in their dealings with each other and the playground is generally a happy and harmonious area. Behaviour is satisfactory. Older pupils are adamant that bullying does not occur – 'but sometimes we do fall out with each other'. However, they agree that behaviour is not always as good as it should be. This is because strategies for managing pupils' behaviour are not consistently applied across the school, with the result that the conduct of some pupils is not always acceptable. Good provision is made for pupils' personal development and pupils develop positive social and moral attitudes which are firmly underpinned by the strong spirituality that is an essential element of this community. There are many opportunities to explore the faiths and traditions of other cultures and very good international links are forged through the Comenius Project. These all considerably enhance pupils' understanding of growing up in a multi-ethnic society. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to stay safe and of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They eagerly

take on responsibilities, such as fund raising for local, national and international charities, and show a real responsibility towards the environment through the 'HOW' (Help Our World) project. Pupils leave the school with average standards in basic skills, and these ensure they are prepared appropriately for the next stage in their education and future life.

The school is a highly caring community and the relationships between adults and pupils are good. Consequently, pupils feel valued and secure. Pupils are well looked after. The weaker element in the care, guidance and support given to pupils is academic guidance. Until recently this has not been focused enough. Systems for checking pupils' academic progress are improving and, as a result, the school is beginning to identify more effectively where pupils need more support. However, currently, assessment information is not used consistently to ensure the needs of all pupils are met.

Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work. They enjoy learning because teachers plan carefully, make an effort to motivate them and ensure lessons are lively. As one pupil commented, 'I enjoy weekends because there is always something to look forward to in school the next week.' Teaching is satisfactory overall, although some good teaching and learning was observed during the inspection. This good teaching is not sufficiently widespread to ensure that all pupils make the best progress possible. One frequent weakness is that the pace of lessons is too slow because teachers talk for too long, leaving pupils with insufficient time to complete tasks. In addition, they do not always act quickly enough to curb off-task chatter from the pupils. Tasks are usually matched to the differing abilities of pupils, but more-able pupils are not always given sufficient challenge in the work that they are set, which inhibits their progress. Pupils acknowledge that careful marking helps them to understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Morale is improving. The headteacher has a clear vision, and knows what the school needs to do to improve further. She is taking appropriate actions to bring this about. The use of data by senior staff and governors to check the school's performance is beginning to improve. As a result, the leadership team is beginning to adopt sensible strategies to bring about improvements, in order to meet challenging targets. This is illustrated by the improvement of writing across the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and, based on the track record, there is a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The governing body is very supportive of the school. Their monitoring role is improving and they have a satisfactory picture of how well the school is performing. The formation of a school improvement committee illustrates their commitment to robust and rigorous monitoring of the school's performance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception class make good progress and standards are a little above average in most areas of learning at the start of Year 1. However, a significant minority are still working towards the goals expected in their early writing skills. The school has quickly identified this and a good emphasis is placed on the development of basic skills, such as phonics, as a result. Teaching is lively and interesting activities are carefully planned to motivate and excite the children. There is a good balance between those activities led by the teacher and those that children choose for themselves. Visits and visitors, as well as lively, interesting themes, make the curriculum and learning relevant and exciting. The care and attention given to children's welfare are good. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and show a good understanding of the needs of young children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan and provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their literacy skills, especially spelling, in all subjects, and provide more opportunities for pupils to solve problems in mathematics.
- Enable teachers to use assessment more effectively to plan lessons which will meet the needs of all pupils.
- Increase the pace of lessons and ensure that pupils, particularly the more able, are sufficiently challenged.
- Maintain a consistent approach to managing the behaviour of pupils.

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.

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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?	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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

How good is 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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	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	3
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	3
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**

6 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Aldhelm's CE Primary School, Doultling, Somerset BA4 4PL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. We think your school gives you a satisfactory education and is working hard to make it better.

- This is what I thought about your school.
- You enjoy school and are keen to learn.
- Your writing is improving, although there is still more to do to make it better.
- You reach the standards you should in other subjects.
- You clearly understand the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise. I enjoyed the 'wake n' shake' first thing in the morning!
- The curriculum covers all the subjects you are supposed to learn and you have a good choice of after-school clubs.
- Teachers help you to make satisfactory progress and you say learning is often made fun.
- The teachers and staff take good care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher understands very well what must be done to make your school even better.
- There are some things that can be improved.
- I think you need to improve your spelling and punctuation, and I would like you to have more opportunities to solve problems in mathematics.
- I have asked teachers to move lessons along a bit more quickly and give more challenging tasks to those of you who find work easy.
- Your teachers need to make really good use of all the information they get about how well you are doing to be sure they give you tasks which will help you learn even more effectively.
- Some of you do not always behave as well as you should. This is a pity because it lets the school down as well as yourselves.

I am glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.

Very best wishes

Mrs Christine Huard Lead inspector

Annex B

6 February 2008

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Inspection of St Aldhelm's CE Primary School, Doultong, Somerset BA4 4PL

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Very best wishes

Mrs Christine Huard
Lead inspector