

St Catherine's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117410
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	319920
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	142
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Wilson
Headteacher	Mrs Lynne Wilson-Leary
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2006
School address	Park Road Ware Hertfordshire SG12 0AW
Telephone number	01920 462653
Fax number	01920 485810

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Smaller than average, the school is part of the local extended schools consortium. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and of those who are learning English as an additional language is below average. The social and economic characteristics of the local area are above the national average. Attainment on entry is just average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average; however, the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is low. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has been awarded: Investors in People status, Healthy Schools Accreditation and the Hertfordshire Quality Standards Mark for its early years provision. The Sports Active Mark was achieved in October 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The school now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and satisfactory value for money; it has made outstanding progress since being made subject to special measures.

Under the effective leadership of the headteacher and with considerable support from the local authority (LA), the school has been transformed into a bright and welcoming establishment where teaching and learning are good and the pupils display positive attitudes to learning. The well organised provision in the Foundation Stage helps pupils to settle quickly and make good progress.

Self-evaluation is good; senior managers have taken positive action to enhance key areas in need of development. Senior staff were invited to observe teaching with HMI; the views they expressed concurred with the judgements given by inspectors. Three-quarters of all teaching was good and some was delivered with outstanding skill. Effective questioning often engaged the pupils' attention and channelled their learning.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The validated results of the 2007 Key Stage 2 national tests were above the national average in reading and mathematics, continuing a trend of steady improvement. Evidence from the school's robust assessment database, the scrutiny of the pupils' work and lesson observations confirm that achievement is at least satisfactory in all year groups. There is no discernable difference between the progress made by girls or boys, those from different ethnic backgrounds, or individuals with learning difficulties and/or disabilities compared to their peers. More work needs to be done through curriculum planning to raise the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels by Year 6, especially in mathematics and science.

The pupils' personal development is good. They behave well, enjoy learning and work hard but there are too few opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology across the curriculum to enhance their learning. Overall, care support and guidance are satisfactory but academic guidance is more variable. Pastoral care is strong; however, support from the local church for the spiritual development of the pupils in this Church of England school has been limited. The provision for pupils with special needs has improved; however, inconsistencies of approach remain in the way support is managed and deployed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Significant investment in accommodation, training and resources has been successful; teaching and learning are good. Support staff and volunteers are well directed, their support and direction of small group work is good. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is effective, thematic planning in the mixed age groups is very good and pupils make good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels through a more coordinated approach to curriculum planning.
- Make greater use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning.

- Ensure consistency of approach to, and management of, the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Seek support from the diocese for school assemblies and curriculum development.

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

The 2007 teacher assessments at Key Stage 1 were above average in mathematics and reading although the proportion achieving the higher level 3 in these areas was below expectations; the outcomes of the writing assessment were below average.

The proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in the Year 6 national tests were above average in English, mathematics and science; similarly, the number of pupils attaining the higher level 5 in mathematics was low.

Evidence from a scrutiny of the pupils' books and the school's robust assessment database indicates that most pupils are working at an appropriate level in Year 6. Recent Year 2 test results indicate that pupils are working at close to national expectations in reading and mathematics although progress in writing is more limited.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' good behaviour, their positive attitudes and enjoyment they find in learning are strong aspects of their personal development. Pupils get on well together in this friendly, happy school; older ones particularly enjoy caring for the younger ones; for example, by reading with them and organising sports clubs. In this way, pupils make an important contribution to the school community. The pupils understanding of what it takes to lead fit and healthy lives is good and many take part in the wide range of sports opportunities provided, as well as benefiting from advice via the 'Get Active' programme through the local rugby club.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. Their moral and social understanding is good although their spiritual development is more limited. Unusually in a Church of England school, HMI could find no evidence of assemblies being taken by the parish priest. The pupils have a mature understanding about the consequences of poor behaviour and the impact of bullying, as they have been closely involved in compiling both the anti-bullying and behaviour policies.

Attendance has improved and is above the national average. Good personal and social skills, a growing knowledge of the French language and average achievement in basic skills, ensure pupils are adequately prepared for their secondary education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good. The team of teachers and assistants has been strengthened significantly in the last year, all have benefited from the well judged monitoring and support

provided by the headteacher and the local authority. In this inspection, all staff were seen teaching and three-quarters of lessons were judged to be good or better.

In most lessons, brisk and well-directed questions secured the pupils' attention and developed well-organised learning opportunities with energy, humour and praise. There were smooth transitions between activities and ample opportunities for the children to work independently. The very best lessons were well planned to include additional challenge for the more able pupils and the effective direction of support staff. Where teaching was less effective, the purpose of the learning activity was not always clear to the pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy a good range of sports activities and clubs, all of which are helping to broaden their outlooks and develop their interests. The new golf course for younger pupils is very popular.

The curriculum is about to be reviewed to ensure that it really appeals to the pupils' interests, that subjects are linked together more effectively and that basics such as literacy, numeracy and computer skills are developed in a wide range of subject settings. Currently there are too few chances for pupils to write at length in subjects other than English. There are also limited opportunities for pupils to reach the higher levels in mathematics and science, by learning how to solve problems and conducting practical science investigations.

Good links with local secondary schools means that provision for sports, clubs and foreign languages are enhanced.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good and this helps pupils to develop into happy learners. Good relationships between adults and pupils encourage them to share their concerns and this helps them to feel safe. All procedures to help keep pupils safe meet current government requirements and are firmly in place.

Those who need additional help in lessons are starting to receive more targeted support because teaching assistants are being deployed more effectively. However, variations in the methodology need to be addressed to ensure a consistent level of support. Academic guidance in the form of setting pupils targets is really helping them improve the standards of their written work. However, ways for pupils to evaluate and improve their own work, are not quite as solidly embedded into everyday practice, and are better for older pupils than for younger ones.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The outstanding progress made by the school in the past year has been, in a large part, down to the vision, energy and dedication of the headteacher. However, the support provided by the LA school effectiveness adviser and her colleagues, combined with the improvements in governance, led and supported by the local authority action group have played a critical part in this process. The weaknesses in employment procedures and financial management highlighted by inspection resulted in the removal of the governing body's delegated powers. As a result of

the efforts of the LA action group, all these matters have been dealt with appropriately and delegated powers were restored at the end of February 2008; governance is satisfactory.

The Foundation Stage is managed well and the school has successfully recruited a deputy headteacher who can lead the further development of teaching and learning. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 1 and 2 improved in 2007 and further progress has been made during this academic year. The systematic monitoring, evaluation and support of teaching and learning has been a key part of this process. Assessment data is robust and managed effectively by the headteacher.

Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can. Resources are deployed very effectively and efficiently and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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	2

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	3
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	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	3

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?	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?	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	1
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

5 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's C of E Primary School, Park Road, Ware, Herts, SG12 0AW

Thank you for making us so welcome when inspectors visited the school recently.

We were very pleased with the progress the school has made. Mrs Wilson-Leary and the staff are doing such a good job we believe you no longer need the special help you have been receiving.

Your school has improved a great deal in the last year and you have all played an important part in this. Your behaviour has improved and you are coming to school much more regularly than before. We were particularly impressed with the caring way that the older ones look after the younger ones. Your lessons have improved and I know you enjoy them a great deal. The staff take good care of you and your school is a friendly, happy place in which to learn.

I have asked Mrs Wilson-Leary, the governors and staff to; improve the way your subjects are organised so you can investigate topics and show what you are capable of, to provide more opportunities for you to work with the computers and to share the best ways to support those who need more help with your learning across the school.

I have really enjoyed visiting your school and I look forward to hearing about your continued success,

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector