

Almondsbury Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109157
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	324912
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	261
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	Sue Hewson
Headteacher	Paul Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sundays Hill Almondsbury Almondsbury BS32 4DS
Telephone number	01454 612517

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2009
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Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The intake of this average-sized village school has changed over the past three years as it draws an increasing number of pupils from outside the village of Almondsbury. There are nine classes, four at Key Stage 1 and five at Key Stage 2. Of these, two classes at each key stage cater for two year groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has more than doubled but remains below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British ethnicity. The school has achieved Activemark for the third year in a row, and has Healthy Schools recognition. It has also received a bronze International School Award and is recognised as a Gold Award Sing-Up school.

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 equips pupils well to face the challenges of future life. The school gives similar attention to both the pupils' academic achievement and their personal development, providing a wealth of activities beyond lessons that broaden pupils' experiences and cater for their widely differing needs and talents. Most parents are very pleased with the school. One praised the way it provides pupils with a 'well balanced grounding to life' while another noted how pupils are 'nurtured, encouraged and stretched in equal measure'.

Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards. They do particularly well in reading and science where a high proportion of pupils exceed age expectations. Fewer pupils reach the higher level of attainment in mathematics, and fewer still in writing. The school has evened out inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 and this is helping to accelerate pupils' progress and overcome any remaining pockets of underachievement. Teachers have become increasingly skilful at using regular assessments to inform their lesson planning. As a result, pupils are usually given tasks that meet their needs and build on their previous learning. On a few occasions, tasks are not sufficiently challenging, especially for the more able pupils. The curriculum has also improved to take better account of the needs of pupils in the mixed-age classes. The rich variety of experiences it offers contribute much to the pupils' excellent awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles and the high standards they achieve in music, physical education (PE) and information and communication technology (ICT).

Pupils thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school life, are very well motivated and participate in lessons with enthusiasm. This is because teachers use a wide variety of interesting resources and present new ideas in ways that engage pupils actively in learning. Adults take excellent care of the pupils and, as a result, pupils feel very safe and confident. The school has created very good links with the local community which parents value. It has put a number of initiatives in place to expand pupils' horizons beyond their immediate locality and to raise their awareness of different cultures, faiths and traditions.

One parent accurately described the leadership and management as 'a solid team with a dedicated board of governors'. Many expressed their appreciation of the way the headteacher has moved the school forward. Staff and governors share a common vision and have very high aspirations for the school. They evaluate the school's performance rigorously and take prompt and purposeful action to address identified shortcomings. As a result, standards are rising as the quality of provision steadily improves. Recent changes of staff and temporary arrangements have interrupted the development of some middle management roles, but these changes are carefully managed to minimise disruption. The improvements that have been made since the school's last inspection show that it is in a strong position to raise standards further and to achieve its ultimate ambition to be an outstanding school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Pupils start school with the skills expected for their age and make good progress to reach standards that are just above average in most areas of learning. Their personal development is outstanding because staff place significant emphasis on nurturing their confidence and encouraging their independence. Staff pay excellent attention to promoting the children's welfare, particularly through the very close working partnership with parents and carers. Children

thoroughly enjoy learning because teachers plan an exciting range of activities, both in the classroom and outdoors. Good direct teaching of reading, writing and numeracy skills lays a solid foundation for the future. Children also have the opportunity to choose activities for themselves. On occasions, adults do not check often enough to ensure that children are learning from these activities. In the main, adults interact with children well and discuss what they are learning, often extending children's understanding through skilful questioning. Assessment procedures are currently being refined to ensure they provide an accurate picture of each child's progress through the areas of learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader works and plans closely with the teacher of the Reception/Year 1 class to check that all children are receiving similarly good provision. She is also seeking ways to maximise the potential of the limited outdoor learning space.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' writing and numeracy skills, particularly at the higher levels of attainment, in order to ensure all pupils make the best possible progress throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are rising again after a noticeable dip in 2006 and pupils are making good progress. All pupils achieve well, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school is working purposefully to narrow the gap between standards in reading and writing. Pupils make exceptionally good progress in reading and a high proportion reach above average standards, as is also the case in science. Progress in writing has been much slower in recent years, but pupils are now developing increasingly competent skills across a wide range of genres. Sometimes, they do not take sufficient care with spelling and handwriting. Pupils achieve well in mathematics but, as with writing, the school has rightly identified the need to ensure that more pupils reach above average levels of attainment. The more able pupils do not always achieve as well as they should when applying their mathematical knowledge and skills in investigations and problem-solving activities. Pupils do particularly well in music, PE and ICT because of the high quality provision for these subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school and their positive attitudes to learning are reflected in their above average attendance levels. As one pupil commented, 'We like school because we have such great opportunities.' Very close links with the church and the local community contribute significantly to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral and social development. Visits to different places of worship, links with a school in Uganda and a strong tradition of music and drama are helping to expand pupils' awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity. Pupils have a good understanding of the common values they share with others from different backgrounds. The recent visit by a Ugandan Bishop gave pupils an excellent opportunity to extend their knowledge of life in Kitgum, where they have links with a primary school. Pupils make the most of the many opportunities to take on responsibilities around the school, such as 'playground pals' and representing their classmates on the pupil council. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe, especially when using the internet. Pupils leave the school as confident, well-rounded young people ready to face the challenges that lie ahead of them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Effective teaching is grounded in good subject knowledge and an understanding of how children learn. As a result, teachers plan lessons that almost always meet pupils' widely differing needs. Occasionally, there is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils. Pupils learn well because teachers explain clearly the purpose of each lesson and what is expected of the pupils. Excellent relationships and high expectations encourage pupils to strive to do their best. Continuous assessment of pupils' understanding and skills feeds into the next lesson's planning to ensure progression in learning. Teachers engage pupils very well by providing an interesting variety of experiences that involve pupils actively in their own learning. This helps lessons to move along at a good pace, although occasionally pupils spend too long listening to the teacher, which causes enthusiasm to wane. Teachers give pupils regular feedback on the quality of their work, both verbally and through helpful marking that shows pupils how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There has been good improvement in the way the curriculum is planned so that it better meets the needs of pupils in classes where there are two different year groups. The school is now looking to improve it further through a more creative, thematic approach that crosses subject boundaries. There is appropriate emphasis on developing key literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and on extending pupils' knowledge and skills in other subjects. A wide-ranging programme of personal, social and health education includes opportunities for pupils to visit a Life skills Centre and to experience outdoor adventurous activities. A residential trip to Paris allows Year 6 pupils to practise speaking French (which pupils learn in every class) and to encounter a different culture. Opportunities to perform in the school choirs and orchestra and to participate in a multitude of different sports activities with pupils from other schools greatly enrich pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Outstanding pastoral care helps all pupils to feel safe and confident that any concerns they have will be dealt with promptly. There are robust procedures for risk assessment, and for protecting and safeguarding pupils. Teachers carefully check the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and take prompt action to provide extra support where it is needed. Several parents wrote in praise of this provision and one described the school's 'creative and sympathetic initiatives' to enable a pupil to access the curriculum. Rigorous assessment and tracking of all pupils' progress ensures that early signs of underachievement are detected and acted upon. Pupils have personal targets to achieve in literacy and numeracy but do not always make effective use of these to keep their learning on track. Some teachers use very good strategies to involve pupils in assessing their own learning but this good practice is not yet fully embedded throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's decisive and clear-sighted leadership has provided the impetus to reverse the downward trend in standards that began a few years ago. Skilful in developing leadership capacity amongst staff, he is well supported by senior leaders and governors, who share his high aspirations for the school. The development of subject leaders has been hindered slightly by staff changes, but key roles are evolving well. Rigorous self-evaluation has led to carefully planned actions that have eradicated inconsistencies in teaching and learning, particularly at Key Stage 2. The school takes good account of pupils' and parents' opinions when deciding future initiatives. Governors make thorough and regular checks on the school's performance and work closely with staff to identify where improvement is needed, providing both challenge and support. Whilst maintaining a strong ethos founded on Christian values, the school has a comprehensive plan for promoting understanding of different faiths, cultures and social backgrounds. It has embarked on innovative strategies such as the 'Cultural Blogging' programme. New initiatives to forge links with schools in contrasting localities in the UK have yet to come fully to fruition. The school has evaluated the impact of this work through discussions with pupils. The results confirm pupils' good understanding and awareness of national and global issues.

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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?	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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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?	1
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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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 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**

1 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Almondsbury CE Primary School, Bristol, BS32 4DS

We enjoyed our visit to your school very much and would like to thank you for your warm welcome and for talking to us about your work. You told us how much you enjoy being at school and that you always feel safe and well looked after. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and by the way you work hard in lessons. Almondsbury is a good school and here are some of the things we found during our visit:

- You get off to a good start in Reception and continue to make good progress throughout the school.
- You achieve above average standards and are well prepared for moving on to secondary school. You do particularly well in reading and science.
- Your school gives you many worthwhile experiences, including specialist teaching in music and PE, learning French, and a very wide range of clubs, visits, visitors and special events.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and involve you in lots of 'hands-on' learning.
- When they mark your work, they include helpful comments that show you how to improve.
- Many of you know your targets and use them to help you but you are still getting used to these.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

The adults who run the school know what needs to be improved and are working hard to make Almondsbury an outstanding school. We agree with them that there is one main thing that would help you to do even better. Quite a lot of you reach high standards for your age in reading and science, but not quite so many in mathematics and even fewer in writing. We have asked the school to help more of you reach the higher levels in writing and mathematics. You can help by remembering your targets and checking your work to see how you could improve it.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at Almondsbury and make the most of every opportunity.

Yours faithfully

Carole Skinner

Lead inspector