

Aldermaston Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109947
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	325061
Inspection date	3 June 2009
Reporting inspector	David Scott

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	156
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	Mrs Cathy Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Barke
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wasing Lane Aldermaston Reading RG7 4LX
Telephone number	0118 9713362

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	3 June 2009
Inspection number	325061

Fax number

0118 9714880

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	3 June 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How well do children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make progress?
- Do all groups of pupils achieve equally well?
- How effectively do the curriculum, assessment and learning support promote the pupils' personal development as well as their academic success?

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation (SEF), by observing lessons, scrutinising the school's records of pupils' standards and achievement and other documentation, and by discussions with pupils and staff. Parents' responses to questionnaires also informed judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own evidence, as given in the SEF, were other than justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

At Aldermaston Primary School the proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is much lower than in most schools. A fifth of pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is average. Many of these have specific speech, language and communication difficulties. Compared with the national picture, only a small proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds or have a home language other than English. The school has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage through the Reception class. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the customary times of the year is higher than is usually found. The school has achieved the Healthy School and Activemark Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Aldermaston Primary School provides a good standard of education for its pupils. It has made great strides in getting back on track following the effects of a devastating flood and is in a strong position to improve further. This is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive views of parents who consider that 'Aldermaston is a lovely school with a real community feel which has exceeded our expectations.'

Overall standards are above average and pupils achieve well from their sometimes below-average starting points in the Reception class. In Years 1 and 2 pupils maintain good progress from the Reception class to reach above-average standards across writing, reading and mathematics. They do particularly well in reading because of the school's strong emphasis on literature and drama. They continue to make good progress at Key Stage 2. They achieve particularly well in mathematics and science and, by the end of Year 6, standards are above average in these subjects. This is because staff engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm by providing problem-solving activities related to real-life situations such as the well-considered Safari project, calculating how many animals were present in the park. In 2008 standards in English dipped slightly and were only average. The school has put in place a range of strategies to improve pupils' achievement, and records of current progress indicate that pupils in Year 6 are on track to meet their challenging targets. All groups of learners make good progress. Pupils at the early stages of learning English make rapid gains in fluency because of the carefully targeted support they receive.

The sustained improvements over three years at Aldermaston owe much to the focused leadership of the headteacher and the very committed staff. Good leadership and management have ensured that each staff member is ambitious for the pupils. Teachers and support staff create a lively learning environment in which children can thrive whatever their starting points. Pupils know their well-considered targets, which encourage their learning. As one commented, 'Targets are like goal posts where you know what you are aiming for.' Governors, too, take their responsibilities seriously and play a full part in the school's development. They provide good challenge and share their knowledge and expertise freely. Self-evaluation is honest and reflective. The school has successfully evaluated its contribution to community cohesion, which is good. This has been achieved by developing and promoting a clear and detailed understanding of its own community and the different faiths, ethnicities and cultures that exist within and beyond it.

At the heart of the school's good care, guidance and support for pupils is the way it involves parents and other external agencies in their nurture. As one parent commented, 'Aldermaston is a family school where parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's education.' This is central to the school's success with vulnerable pupils and those who find learning difficult, who receive good support. Art, drama and music are used successfully, not only to build pupils' confidence but also to allow children the space to explore and manage their feelings. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. Whole-school arrangements for pupils' academic guidance are also effective, but while this information appears in planning, it does not always permeate teachers' marking or explanations in lessons well enough to enable pupils to move to the next level.

The school lays great store on maintaining a secure and safe environment and has comprehensive and robust systems for safeguarding and risk assessment. Pupils prepare well for their future

education and economic well-being, because of their good basic skills and through the school's strong links with secondary partners. They clearly enjoy school and attendance is excellent. This was demonstrated when pupils showed remarkable determination to attend school during a period of inclement weather to ensure they would maintain their 100% attendance record. The school council are enthusiastic about their roles and are convinced they make a difference to others, accurately reflecting their opinions and suggestions. They are justly proud of their influence on the environment. For example, in a visit to a rainforest, pupils in partnership with the local community took part in 'The Great Plant Hunt' - a national event to mark the anniversaries of Kew Gardens and Darwin - which brought to life their understanding of ecological issues.

Aldermaston prides itself on being an inclusive school. Pupils report that they feel safe within the school community. Relationships are harmonious and pupils behave well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are tremendously knowledgeable as to what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and are totally committed to keeping fit, and this has been recognised by the school achieving the Healthy School and Activemark Awards. Pupils of all ages are keen to take on a range of responsibilities to assist with the smooth running of the school. For example, pupils act as 'playground friends' to each other. They delight in singing and the many opportunities for performance through the school productions, and are involved in music-making and acting for local and national events.

The well-orchestrated curriculum is enriched greatly by many out-of-hours activities and underpins the pupils' success in learning. For example, in the Philosophy 4 Children (P4C) programme teachers make good use of information and communication technology to enthuse learners. Good teaching enables pupils to engage very purposefully in learning because teachers ensure they have interesting tasks to hold their attention. For example, in a Year 6 numeracy session pupils thoroughly enjoyed honing their compass and measuring skills in preparation for their forthcoming mountaineering visit to Wales. In Year 3 pupils were generous in giving advice to each other on how to improve their calculation work. The school has accurately identified that, in some lessons, pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their own learning style in order to make faster progress. Classrooms are lively and colourful with celebratory and thought-provoking displays.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the excellent relationships between staff and parents that help children to settle quickly. The learning diaries provide up-to-date information on children's progress and strengthen communication between home and school. The Early Years Foundation Stage team effectively nurtures the children's social and emotional development. A stimulating curriculum, high-quality care and a secure environment support them very well and contribute to children's personal development. They learn to cooperate with each other well, developing good attitudes to their learning. There is a good blend of adult-led activities and opportunities for children to choose for themselves. However, the learning opportunities during some free-choice activities are not always sufficiently well planned to maximise learning.

All groups of children, including the most vulnerable, make good progress. This is due to the sharp focus given to the steady acquisition of essential skills for learning that some lack when they join the school. All staff are effective in supporting the children, especially those who find it difficult to adjust to expectations. Children enjoy school, and this was evident, for example,

in their excitement in model-making for the collage of alligators for their rainforest project. As a result, by the time children leave Reception, they reach standards which are above those expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by increasing the proportion of outstanding lessons, by developing learning styles which actively involve pupils more fully in their learning in order for them to make faster progress.
- Strengthen the good practice in assessment through greater clarity in teachers' marking and explanations to ensure that all groups of learners receive precise advice on how to improve their work.

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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 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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
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 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	1
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**

15 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aldermaston Church of England Primary School, Reading, RG7 4LX

Thank you very much for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit. We were very pleased to hear from you how much you enjoyed school, and to see how well you worked in lessons.

You go to a good school that helps you to learn, and that looks after you well. We were impressed by the way you get on together.

You and your parents are rightly proud of Aldermaston Primary. You all think that it is a fantastic school and we agree with you. Your headteacher, staff and governors want the best for you and are determined to see you make as much progress as you can in lessons and in your personal development. Because you enjoy school so much, your attendance is excellent. We were extremely impressed to hear how some of you braved the snow in order to maintain your 100% attendance record!

Staff know you all individually and look after you very well. You also help to look after others, particularly those younger than you. You told us that you feel really comfortable in school and that there is always someone to help you if you are distressed. You eat healthily and keep fit through the many sports clubs. You express your views clearly but at the same time you are very ready to listen to others. You understand the importance of helping those outside your community and are ready to support children less fortunate than yourselves.

Before we left, we talked to your teachers about how the school could do even better. They agree with us that they need to explain clearly how you can improve your work. Your teachers already deliver good lessons, and we have asked them to ensure that more are excellent, by helping you to discover how you learn best so that you can achieve even higher standards. I am sure you will continue to do your level best to cooperate with your teachers and continue to help support those in need of extra help.

I wish you a very happy future at Aldermaston.

Yours faithfully

David Scott

Lead Inspector