

All Saints Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Datchworth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117430
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326607
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

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 aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	162
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 Viv Marshall
Headteacher	Miss Mary Willatt
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hollybush Lane Datchworth Knebworth Hertfordshire SG3 6RE
Telephone number	01438 812381

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Inspection number	326607

Fax number

01438 813802

Age group 4-11

Inspection dates 19-20 May 2009

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller-than-average primary school serves pupils from generally affluent families in Datchworth and surrounding villages, with about 20% of the pupils travelling from Stevenage. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and all have English as their first language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs, including pupils with specific learning, complex learning or speech, language and communication difficulties, is similar to most other schools. About 15% of pupils have medical needs or allergies. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in September or January each year, most with the knowledge and skills expected of their age.

The school provides before-school care and there is an independently run after school club, the 'Rising Stars' on the site, which is inspected separately. The school has close links with the local church. It holds the Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and the Investors in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This lively and caring village school provides its pupils with a good education. It is effective in its mission to help pupils gain in experience and understanding, show respect for the community and environment and develop basic skills. The good leadership, management and governance, based on a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, play a significant part in the school's success. Most classes are shared between two teachers, a deployment challenge that is met effectively. However, the opportunities for subject leaders to work together are limited as they are only in school for part of the week. Subject leaders have been very effective in generating an outstanding curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2, but the limitations of the job-share arrangements have restricted their opportunities to extend skills in their subjects across the curriculum. The management of the Early Years Foundation Stage, although satisfactory, has had limited impact because there is no Early Years Foundation Stage specialist on the staff. Overall, the school shows satisfactory capacity for future improvement.

Pupils enter Year 1 with the knowledge and skills expected of their age. They make satisfactory progress throughout Key Stage 1 and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are generally average by the end of Year 2. Writing standards this year present a mixed picture. Higher attaining pupils reach the standard expected and others, for various reasons, were not expected to reach the same standard.

Progress accelerates during Key Stage 2, especially in Years 5 and 6 due to some outstanding teaching and learning. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards reached in the national tests for 11-year-olds have been consistently above average over the last few years and the school data show this has been sustained this year. This equates to good achievement overall. Pupils are cared for extremely well and, because of this, feel safe and happy in school. Excellent relationships between pupils and staff contribute to pupils' effective learning. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils respect and care for each other, carrying out their responsibilities within the school community and beyond with dedication and cheerfulness. A parent said, 'There is real sense of community and older children look after the younger ones.' Pupils care for the environment and their thorough understanding of how to keep healthy and safe are good examples of their abilities to take personal responsibility. However, although some of the older pupils have opportunities to take responsibility for their learning; this is not the case throughout the school. Some teachers do not make the most of their pupils' good attitudes to their work by involving them in planning what they will study, evaluating their efforts and setting personal targets.

Teaching and learning are good overall. The outstanding curriculum, which provides opportunities for learning that extends well beyond the National Curriculum requirements, makes lessons and additional activities interesting. Basic skills are taught thoroughly. At best, these are extended very effectively throughout the whole curriculum and all teachers plan links between subjects. However, some teachers do not make the most of opportunities for pupils to investigate, experiment and plan their own learning. For example, the web cam of the blue tits' nest box is an excellent resource, but pupils did not use it to gather first hand data about frequency of feeding trips, diet or growth rates. Although pastoral care, guidance and support are exemplary, the quality of the academic guidance pupils receive is variable and some teachers' marking gives little advice about how pupils can improve their work.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, maintaining the expected knowledge and skills for their age by Year 1. Their pastoral needs are met well. Children feel safe and welcome and enjoy coming to school. The staff know individual children well and ensure that those with specific medical or learning needs receive good care and support and are helped to feel one of the group. Children respond well to the teacher's high expectations of good behaviour and are eager to please. They rise to challenges well. For example, during the inspection, they were fully engrossed in drawing the vintage Rolls Royce car that was brought in for them to see. The quality of their drawings reflected a wide spread of age and ability, and some were very mature, accurate and detailed sketches.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children are taught the basic skills they need across the areas of learning. However, they do not always learn in ways appropriate to their age, spending too much time as a class listening to the teacher. The more able children learn well during these sessions, but the younger and less able children struggle and need additional support. The children enjoy their play activities, but these are not sufficiently purposeful or planned to extend individual children's learning. Their personal development is therefore satisfactory rather than good, because despite their good behaviour, relationships and positive attitudes, they do not develop sufficiently as independent learners. The outdoor area is small but the children share the large playground so get enough exercise to keep healthy. They enjoy their daily fresh fruit snacks.

The cohort is unusually large this year but is due to return to more normal numbers next term. Indoor space is limited and there is no covered area to enable children to extend their learning outside in inclement weather. The provision is managed satisfactorily overall, but the school recognises the need for further training in how best to organise the classroom and activities to accelerate children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage provision to ensure a balance of teacher-led and child-initiated learning that is specifically planned to accelerate children's progress and promote independence.
- Ensure all teachers have sufficient expertise to generate enquiry, independent learning and the application of skills across the subjects.
- Involve all pupils, including those in Key Stage 1, in evaluating their performance and setting targets for improvement, and ensure all teachers' marking provide pupils with clear guidance to help them improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In the 2008 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were average and pupils made satisfactory progress. This year, although pupils have made satisfactory progress from their starting points, because of the range of abilities, standards in writing are lower than last year. The school's tracking shows that pupils' progress accelerates in Key Stage 2 and the inspectors saw rapid progress in lessons in Years 5 and 6 during the inspection, which was confirmed by the quality of pupils' work. Standards in mathematics, while remaining above average in the national tests, had dipped slightly since

2006. However, the school's data shows that this has been addressed and the present Year 6 pupils' standards remain well above average in all three subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their aesthetic appreciation is greatly enhanced by the many music, art and environmental activities they engage in. Attendance is good and behaviour excellent. Pupils take great pleasure in the many varied lessons and activities that are provided. They feel safe, know they can turn to a trusted adult if need be and know how to keep healthy through exercise and a good diet. Their good achievements in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) and their self-confidence stand them in good stead for secondary education and the world of work. Younger pupils have fewer opportunities to apply these skills to other tasks. Pupils make a very good contribution to the school and local community, for example through environmental projects, concerts and fund-raising activities and have a good appreciation of wider political issues. Their appreciation of social and cultural diversity within Great Britain is less well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspectors were unable to see every teacher because of the job share arrangements and students' teaching practice. However, pupils' achievements and their completed work demonstrate good quality teaching and learning overall. Teachers' planning meets the needs of the range of abilities in each class. Some teachers have high expectations of their pupils' abilities and ensure that they use the full range of their skills as they work. Some practice is outstanding as teachers' expertise and enthusiasm extends pupils' literacy skills through a range of genre or promotes high levels of creativity and organisation in music. Some pupils have too few opportunities to follow their interests and apply their learning because the planning is sometimes adhered to inflexibly, without extracting the skills that could be developed through independent and investigatory study. All teachers question pupils effectively, extending learning in lessons, although the quality of written advice is variable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The many high-quality displays are a clear testament to the rich and diverse curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2. Additional activities, including specialist physical education and music tuition and an extensive environmental curriculum provide pupils with excellent enrichment. The high-quality environmental area and the good use of the local area help pupils make the most of their locality. Theme days, such as paper sculpture and pottery, enable pupils to excel in the arts. Provision for the basic subjects of English, mathematics and science is effective in enabling pupils to make good progress and provision for ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils are using computers throughout the curriculum. Older pupils learn French and some study Latin. A wide range of clubs, visitors and visits add zest to the already

comprehensive learning opportunities. Because the curriculum is so comprehensive, pupils' knowledge is extended effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' outstanding behaviour and care for each other is a tribute to the high levels of pastoral care the school provides. Child protection procedures are rigorous and the school meets the government requirements for safeguarding pupils. Although most pupils have two teachers, because of the clear policies and systems, each adult is well informed and able to support pupils with social or emotional difficulties. This is a very close community where pupils are nurtured. The school has good systems for tracking pupils' progress and records are accessible, easing the challenges generated by the teachers' job shares. Most pupils have, and know, their targets for improvement although teachers' use of them and pupils' contribution towards them is variable. Although oral academic guidance is consistently good, some year groups do not receive sufficient written guidance to help them see how they have improved over time. Neither do they have the knowledge they need to set personal targets towards their next steps in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The management of both physical and educational provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, ensuring pupils' needs are met and that they are fully included in all aspects of school life. Gifted and talented pupils, whatever their talents, are encouraged and provided for well. Parents are confident that the school is well led and managed and that it is effective in meeting their children's needs. Links with other agencies, including pupils' future schools, are effective and well-organised. Local and international community cohesion is promoted very effectively but is more limited at promoting an understanding of cultural and social diversity within Great Britain. The headteacher identifies professional development needs through monitoring and performance management and facilitates support and training when appropriate. For example, local authority advisers are supporting teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage as there is not an Early Years Foundation Stage specialist on the staff. A planned reorganisation of the leadership team for next year is aimed at generating more generic subject leadership to help teachers extend opportunities for independent learning, although, as this is not yet in place the present potential for improvement is satisfactory. Resources are deployed well and the school's use of specialist support to extend learning opportunities is particularly effective. Leaders and governors set challenging targets, which are met effectively.

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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	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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	1
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	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?	1
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	3
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

21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of All Saints Voluntary Aided Primary School, Datchworth, SG3 6RE

Thank you all for your friendliness and help during our visit to your school. We were so pleased to see how much you enjoyed your school. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and the way you help each other. Your school is like a big happy family. We agree with you and your parents that you are all very well cared for. You have every right to be proud of your good school and yourselves. You work hard and make good progress. By the time you leave to go to your new schools, many of you are achieving higher levels than most other 11-year-olds. Well done, and well done to your teachers and school leaders who manage the school well.

We have asked your teachers to do some things to help you learn even faster by giving you more responsibility for your learning. We want children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to spend much more time learning through exciting and interesting activities. These are just what they need to learn for themselves. The rest of you have an outstanding curriculum that offers you the opportunities to learn lots of interesting things. Some of you plan your learning, using your skills to experiment and research. I was impressed by the history studies in Year 6. We want all of you to have these opportunities. We know that you learn best when you pursue your interests and are involved fully in helping to organise your learning. We also want teachers to make sure all of you know how to make your work even better and learn how to judge how well you have done. This will help you decide for yourselves what you need to do to improve. As you can see, you have your part to play in making your learning even better. I am sure you will enjoy the challenge.

We wish you all the very best for the future. Please keep up all your good environmental work and enjoy the blue tits.

Yours faithfully

Mrs J Dawson

Lead inspector