

St Andrew's CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115281
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338553
Inspection dates	15 – 16 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	The Reverend D J Moore
Headteacher	Mrs Gill Young
Date of previous school inspection	17 – 18 May 2007
School address	School Green Lane North Weald, Epping Essex CM 16 6EH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with pupils, staff and governors. They observed the school's work and looked at curriculum plans, the school improvement plan, minutes of governors' meetings and summaries of the monitoring of teaching and pupils' work as well as 37 parent questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The progress made by children in the Reception class.
- The impact of the school's drive to improve attainment in writing.
- The factors accounting for increasing rates of progress through Years 3 to 6.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school serving a village community. Most pupils have a White British heritage, with a few from minority ethnic families. Very few pupils are at an early stage of acquiring English. A broadly average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Others have behavioural or emotional problems or have speech, language and communication difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Reception class for four-year-old children.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. A concerted effort by staff and governors has led to significant improvement over recent years. Several aspects of the provision are better than they were at the time of the last inspection. Improvements in the quality of teaching have accelerated pupils' progress so they are now achieving well. From a very low start as they enter Reception, pupils reach average levels of attainment by the end of Year 6. Although pupils reach the expected standards in English overall, their skills in reading are much stronger than in writing. This reflects the national picture, but the gap is wider than is normally the case. Girls tend to outperform boys. Meticulous recording of individual pupils' progress enables staff to monitor how well different groups of pupils are doing and identify those falling behind or who are not fulfilling their potential. Carefully planned work in lessons, complemented by intensive support programmes, help pupils to sustain the momentum in their learning. As a result, the vast majority meet or exceed the challenging targets set for them.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy learning and behave well. When given the opportunity, they show that they can reflect on their own learning and enter into a dialogue with their teachers about how they can improve. This contributes to pupils' enjoyment and enhances their attitudes to school. There is inconsistency in the extent to which teachers promote this approach, however, and addressing this is rightly a school priority. Pupils' moral and social development are good as is seen in their willingness to look out for one another and in their empathy for those less fortunate than themselves. There is scope for more emphasis on encouraging curiosity about the wider world and engaging pupils with different ethnic and religious groups, in order to enhance their spiritual and cultural development.

Good curriculum planning, including links across subjects and the imaginative use of modern technology, means pupils are engaged and motivated to work hard. Wide ranging additional activities support their learning and boost pupils' self-esteem. Safeguarding and care procedures are well established and pupils feel safe and secure within the calm school environment.

The headway made on several fronts over recent years indicates a good capacity for further improvement. Key staff have a firm grasp of priorities and enthuse their colleagues. There is a strong team spirit across the school. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and have been particularly successful in managing a tight budget to achieve good value for money. Their role in influencing the strategic development of the school is less well developed. Community cohesion is promoted by the good relationships established across different groups of pupils and the school's work with families facing particular difficulties. However, the school is aware that there is scope for broader opportunities and a more systematic approach to engaging with communities beyond the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Narrow the gap between pupils' attainment in reading and writing by:
 - sustaining the current emphasis on improving opportunities for pupils to write across the curriculum
 - by engaging pupils more productively, particularly boys, to develop their speech, language and writing skills

- Ensure pupils are aware of the next steps in their learning by:
 - sharing good practice in seizing every opportunity for pupils to reflect on their learning
 - extending opportunities for pupils to comment on their own and one another's work.

- Ensure governors are active participants
 - in shaping the school's direction
 - in promoting community cohesion, ensuring pupils gain a wider view of faiths and cultures outside their immediate community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress through the school. As children start in the Reception class, their language, number and social skills are generally well below those typical of four-year-olds. They make good headway in these key areas of development but, as they enter Year 1, pupils' attainment is below the levels expected of five-year-olds. By the end of Year 6, attainment levels are broadly average. Pupils, particularly boys, do much better in reading than in writing, although efforts to narrow this gap are beginning to bear fruit.

In class and in the playground pupils treat each other with respect and fairness, demonstrating that they can take turns, collaborate successfully and share ideas. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and free from harassment. They know what to do about bullying and do not see it a major issue. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and take part eagerly in a wide range of sporting activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Provision has improved considerably since the last inspection and this has resulted in pupils making better progress. Teachers establish very positive relationships with pupils and most lessons move at a brisk pace. Excellent tracking procedures highlight how well pupils are doing and teachers use this information effectively to pitch work at the right level for different groups. Teachers are skilled in using modern technology to capture pupils' interest and sustain their attention. A 'film to page' initiative where pupils learn to plan, shoot and edit their own films, is proving very successful in motivating pupils, developing their speaking and listening skills and providing stimulating contexts for writing.

Pupils receive good feedback from teachers' marking. In some classes, they routinely review their own and one another's work using specific success criteria. This means pupils gain valuable insights into how to improve. One pupil's attempt to write the opening of a myth was:

'Long, long ago, in the time of the Roman Empire, there lived a man called Blade. Blade was no ordinary man. He was stronger than ten men, with the powers of gods.'

His classmate's comments were, 'I thought the words he used were superb. He described the scene well. The only bad thing was that he didn't write that much'. Ensuring this approach is more consistently used across all classes is rightly a school priority.

The curriculum is well organised and provides a good range of stimulating experiences for pupils, both in lessons and during extra activities. Links between subjects enable pupils to practise, consolidate and extend their key literacy, numeracy and computer skills in meaningful contexts. In their studies of World War II, for example, pupils in Year 6 develop their writing skills and at the same time gaining insights into the plight of evacuees. They extend their desk-top publishing skills on computers when producing information leaflets about the school. Teachers take care to plan work to ensure that pupils do not unnecessarily cover old ground and remain engaged and challenged. Pupils' experiences are enriched through a wide range of sporting and musical activities.

A strength of the curriculum is the way work is adapted to match the different abilities of pupils. This reflects a strong commitment to ensuring equal opportunities.

The extensive range of additional support for individuals and small groups is evidence of the effective care and guidance pupils receive. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well organised. Teaching assistants play a major part in providing finely tuned support in helping pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. The expertise of outside agencies is also drawn on effectively, for example, to support pupils with behavioural and emotional problems. The school also helps families, through 'parent and child' events and arranges counselling for pupils and parents when appropriate. Such arrangements have greatly reduced the number of persistent absentees.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has a caring ethos where all pupils are valued and included. There is a determined commitment to ensuring that pupils do as well as they can. Senior leaders have developed excellent processes for tracking pupils' progress and this is a powerful driver for the school's improvement. Regular meetings are held to discuss pupils' achievement and to identify the next steps needed to improve it. Senior staff have worked to good effect with external partners, such as the local authority, to monitor the quality of teaching, share effective methods and address weaknesses. This has led to greater consistency in teaching, more effective learning and better progress. As a result, standards are rising.

The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement, leading to a clear agenda for action. Governors are increasingly involved in reviewing the school's effectiveness. They receive comprehensive reports from the headteacher and spend increasing time visiting the school to gain first hand information. This is giving them more scope to ask questions and hold the school to account. Governors recognise the need to become more directly involved in shaping the direction of the school through strategic planning. Equality is promoted successfully and discrimination, should it occur, is tackled head on. Good safeguarding procedures and attention to health and safety indicate that these responsibilities are fulfilled well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children join the Reception class with understanding and skills that are well below those typical of their age group. Adults settle children in successfully and help them to become familiar with day-to-day routines. The curriculum is planned carefully to meet children's individual needs and places a clear emphasis on developing their social, language and early number skills. Staff take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and to extend their vocabulary and to develop their confidence in speaking. The systematic teaching of letters and sounds provides the basis for subsequent skills in reading and writing. On-going activities, such as sorting games and construction apparatus extend children's counting skills and to support their understanding of shape and space. Although children make good progress, their attainment in these key areas is below that generally expected by the end of the Reception year.

Attractive resources stimulate children's imagination, and a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities develops their independence. Teachers note small steps in children's learning and plan new activities on a daily basis. Assessment records enable staff to keep a sharp eye on how individual children are doing and compare their attainment to national trends. However, the big picture of overall progress through the Reception year is not easily accessible due to the current recording format.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led. The provision runs smoothly and very good relationships are established with parents. The pre-school unit, within the same building, operates on a part-time basis during the spring and summer terms, and enables children to settle in well as they start Reception. Recent improvements to the outdoor area, including a weatherproof canopy have enhanced opportunities for children to move freely to play and learn in and out of the classroom.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of questionnaires were positive in their views of the school. All parents felt their children enjoyed school. Some written comments expressed concerns about how behaviour is managed. The inspection found no evidence to support this view. Indeed, relationships across the school were very good. A strength of the teaching is in the skilful management of behaviour, which enables all pupils to sustain their attention without disruption. A few parents raised concerns about communication between parents and senior managers. These were followed up by the inspectors who came to the view that the engagement with parents was satisfactory overall.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Andrew's CE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 212 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	35%	24	65%	0	0%	0	0%
The school keeps my child safe	12	32%	23	62%	1	3%	0	0%
The school informs me about my child's progress	5	14%	25	68%	5	14%	0	0%
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	16%	22	59%	2	5%	0	0%
The teaching is good at this school	3	8%	26	70%	2	5%	0	0%
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	19%	21	57%	4	11%	0	0%
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	27%	26	70%	0	0%	0	0%
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	2	5%	27	73%	2	5%	2	5%
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	16%	18	49%	5	14%	0	0%

The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	5%	19	51%	9	24%	1	3%
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	8%	20	54%	7	19%	0	0%
The school is led and managed effectively	2	5%	20	54%	7	19%	3	8%
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	16%	24	65%	2	5%	0	0%

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Andrew's CE Primary School, North Weald, CM 16 6EH

Thank you for making my colleagues and me welcome when we visited your school. We agree with you that it is a good school and saw for ourselves how much you enjoy life at St Andrew's. The school leaders and all staff work hard to help you do as well as you can and it was good to see that you work hard in lessons. Teachers are making great efforts to help you improve your writing skills. We saw from your writing books that this is working and we agree that imaginative ideas, such as making films, writing scripts and stage directions should help to develop your confidence in writing. Teachers sometimes ask you to comment on your own and one another's work. We think this great because it helps you to see how much you have achieved and exactly what you need to do to get even better. We think it would be a good idea for you to do this more often in English and in other subjects too.

We were impressed by the range of extra activities the school provides. Many of you benefit from the extra support you receive in class and from working outside lessons with the teaching assistants. They do a great job. Sport and music are obviously very popular and it was a pity that we did not have time to see you in action on the field or playing your instruments.

During RE and PHSE you find out about how people of different faiths and cultures live their lives. We have suggested that your knowledge and understanding of how people from different backgrounds can live together in harmony could be extended through contact with children in other schools. The adults have said that they will look into this.

It was interesting to find out what the school council had achieved last year and we hope that the election for new members goes well.

We hope you enjoy the new school year and wish to all the best for the future

Yours faithfully,

Rob Crompton
Lead inspector

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