

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117407
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338999
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Catherine Moorcroft
Headteacher	Mrs Rosemary Woodall
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They spent the majority of their time looking at learning, observed 12 lessons and saw nine teachers. They met with parents, pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's records, documents, policies, assessment information and 89 parental questionnaires.

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

- whether improvements in teaching have led to pupils making better progress
- if the school has improved standards in English
- the progress of pupils, particularly boys, in Key Stage 1.

Information about the school

Most pupils at St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just below average; the largest group of these pupils has moderate learning difficulties. The school has a new headteacher and management team since the previous inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Andrews is a good and improving school. The headteacher and staff have taken concerted action to address slowing progress and weaknesses in writing. Their strong emphasis on developing teaching and promoting better writing has started to pay off, and standards are rising and are now above average. Teaching is good and this ensures good progress and achievement. Effective support for all pupils, including those with moderate learning difficulties, means that no groups lag behind. However, some lessons can be less engaging and the guidance given to pupils about how to improve their work is inconsistent and often imprecise.

The school works intensively to engage parents more closely with their children's learning and development. Positive views expressed in Ofsted questionnaires demonstrate considerable successes. One parent, typical of many, wrote, 'Both my children are always keen to come to school and eager to tell me what they have done during the day. That to me says everything about St Andrews.' Pupils take great pleasure in all aspects of school life. They relish the warm, friendly relationships with teachers and one another and their behaviour is outstanding. They co-operate freely in lessons and are confident that they are safe and well cared for. Their personal development is good, helping them to grow up as sociable, mature individuals. However, not enough is done to promote pupils' understanding of their place in multi-cultural Britain and the wider world.

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. Good leadership and management have led to most effective actions to improve teaching and boost progress. Governors fully support the improvements. Monitoring of teaching is precise and regular and uses helpful criteria to analyse strengths and weaknesses and to promote better practice. In consequence, pupils' performance is improving. The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and of what it needs to do to continue improving and this is encapsulated in its comprehensive development plans.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By September 2010, ensure teaching is more consistent in engaging the pupils' interest and providing them with clear advice on how to improve their work.
- By September 2010, develop pupils' understanding of the school in a local, national and global context and of their place in a multi-cultural society.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' standards as they enter Year 1 fluctuate a little each year. Generally they are above average, although pupils' capabilities in writing are average. Writing standards were an issue for pupils of all ages and the school has introduced numerous successful initiatives to address this and also to close the gap between girls and boys. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' standards are generally average. Writing standards have risen sharply in the last year and are now similar to those in reading and mathematics. With progress now good, including for boys, achievement in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are currently above average. Again, writing standards have been below those in other areas for some years. The considerable efforts of the school to improve pupils' written work have begun to have a significant impact. Assessment data and lesson observations provide unequivocal information that standards are rising quickly and progress in all years is now good. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, teaching and the curriculum are now more geared to giving pupils many more opportunities for writing. Secondly, the numerous initiatives that the school has introduced to boost progress of identified groups of pupils are proving highly effective. Pupils' achievement, including those who have moderate learning difficulties, is good.

Pupils know how to stay safe, both in and out of school and have a very good grasp of what actions promote good health and which do not. The school council and 'Eco Warriors' group both provide good opportunities for pupils to make their voices heard and to take action to improve their school community. Older pupils keenly take responsibility for smoothing away the daily concerns of younger ones.

Pupils develop the skills of working independently and co-operatively that are so useful in the workplace. Their development of important aptitudes like literacy, numeracy and computing is good. Attendance has improved and is now average. Pupils' social and moral development is particularly strong, and this benefits their good behaviour. Limited opportunities offered by the school mean pupils have too little experience and understanding of our multi-cultural society.

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	2
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.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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

How effective is the provision?

The school nurtures pupils very well. All-encompassing care is a significant element of the school's ethos. Pupils appreciate that there are numerous sympathetic adults they can tell their troubles to and that, if they want, their concerns will be acted upon. They show an understanding of the feelings of others. These positive attitudes support learning very well as they enable lessons to proceed with minimal interruptions. Teachers relate very well to pupils and classrooms are a very good environment for learning.

Most teaching is lively and promotes active learning, leading to good and sometimes better progress. Teachers are confident practitioners, supported by their good subject knowledge and thorough planning. They mostly engage pupils' interest well, managing classrooms effectively and demonstrating very high expectations of behaviour. Teaching assistants are proactive in ensuring that those who need help receive the personal attention they require. Assessment is used constructively to identify groups that would benefit from booster sessions. These interventions are very carefully planned and the school's tracking information indicates that they quickly raise standards. Improvements in achievement are well promoted because many lessons drive learning forwards relentlessly. However, occasionally lessons lack stimulation and challenge, so that not all groups make the progress of which they are capable.

Pupils' books are regularly marked and some staff give pupils helpful advice about how to improve. This practice is variable. Some pupils have clear, individual targets but marking rarely refers to them. More commonly, pupils' targets are largely generic and impersonal and do not promote progress sufficiently.

The curriculum is well adapted to meet the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and this promotes good progress. Great attention has been paid to improving pupils' writing skills, for example, by providing opportunities for writing in other subjects like history and geography. A good instance of this was where Year 4 pupils wrote news reports on the sinking of the Mary Rose. Information and communication technology is usefully employed to encourage learning. Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum and it is further augmented by 'Enrichment Afternoons'

that provide pupils with specialist teaching in a wide range of subjects. Numerous and varied after-school clubs address the interests of many and are very popular.

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 headteacher and senior staff show ambition and a determination to raise standards and improve pupils' life chances. They share their commitment with all staff, ensuring that there is no discrimination and good equality of opportunity for all pupils. These combined efforts have resulted in improvements.

The way the school evaluates itself is good. It uses outside expertise to validate its views. It utilises effective systems to monitor its activities. Assessment provides a clear picture of pupils' progress and the school analyses this information to inform its plans and priorities.

The governing body monitors the school regularly and so has a clear picture of its qualities, although governors can be over-reliant on staff for information about national test results. Governors are supportive, but also provide a sharp challenge to the school when required. Their promotion of safeguarding is thorough. Safeguarding procedures are good and are rigorously checked. Staff understanding of child protection and safeguarding issues is regularly updated through training.

Weekly newsletters provide parents and carers with valuable information about school life. The school correctly views positive relationships with parents as vital to pupils' progress and has been proactive in this area. The headteacher meets all new parents and carers personally, setting up the close collaboration that is such a strong element of the school. Parents are regularly invited into school to improve their awareness of their child's progress and of broader issues, such as how the youngest children start to make marks and write. These strengths are reflected in parents' positive views of the school.

Numerous partnerships benefit the school considerably. Local secondary schools and companies support the school's science week. Close links with pre-school groups are very valuable in helping the youngest as they move towards full-time education. The church contributes well to pupils' personal development. The school understands its local context well. It is aware that it has not done enough to develop pupils' understanding of distant communities and has started an association with a school in its twin village in the Gambia. The school is united and cohesive and regards itself as the village school, taking part in many local activities. It has recently established links with

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the local SLD (Severe Learning Difficulties) school.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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

Children start in the Nursery with skills that are broadly as expected for their age. They make good progress towards meeting their Early Learning Goals and many exceed them by the end of the Reception Year, particularly in speaking and listening, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development. This represents good achievement for children, including those with moderate learning difficulties. This is because many elements of provision are good. Teaching is consistently good and the environment is exciting and challenging, especially in the Reception class. There is a buzz of enthusiasm for the wide range of well-planned and organised activities and children display high levels of independence, curiosity and concentration.

Staff plan well and so ensure that sessions have a good balance between activities that children initiate themselves and those led by adults. Decisions on planning are well informed by assessment of each child's capabilities and progress.

Children behave very well, play together contentedly and show a commitment to keeping themselves and others safe. Staff pay close attention to children's welfare, exhibiting a high level of care for individuals, including those children with medical conditions. Staff are well trained and make safeguarding a priority. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed; the school's evaluation of this as 'innovative and progressive' is correct. These qualities are founded on effective self-evaluation and a very good understanding of the requirements and needs of these young children. The

leaders' priorities of developing accommodation and opportunities to learn outside, to improve writing and to develop children's awareness of cultural diversity are pertinent and well on the way to being met.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents who completed the Ofsted questionnaire support the school very strongly. They raised no significant concerns and the vast majority were happy with their child's experience at the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 231 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	65	28	31	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	63	33	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	45	51	42	47	0	0	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	53	36	40	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	52	58	35	39	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	48	42	47	2	2	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	62	70	26	29	1	1	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)	44	50	37	42	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	53	39	44	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	51	41	47	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	49	38	43	2	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	51	57	35	39	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	67	26	29	1	1	1	1

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 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

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

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 pupil's 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.



26 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Ware, SG12 8BZ

Thank you very much for the warm welcome that you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We agree with you that St Andrew's is a good and happy school. You can take some of the credit for this because your behaviour is excellent. Well done! These positive attitudes help you to learn in lessons and teaching and your progress are both good. You are well cared for and we know that you feel safe at school because you told us. Your personal development is also good.

The mixture of subjects you follow (the curriculum) is good and keeps you interested in your studies. The headteacher and her staff are determined to give you every opportunity to learn and they have worked well to raise your standards and make sure that everyone achieves well.

I have asked the school to concentrate on improving two main areas:

- make sure that you are always interested and involved in your lessons and that the marking and target-setting shows you all how to improve your work
- provide more opportunities to improve your understanding about your place in the wider world.

Once again, many thanks for your help. It was great meeting you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector

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