

St Catherine's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117410
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339001
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Wilson
Headteacher	Mrs Kim Hall
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, one of whom visited the school for half a day specifically to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. Inspectors visited 11 lessons during which eight teachers were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and the chair of governors. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its monitoring and assessment records, safeguarding documents and those relating to health, safety and strategic planning. In addition, 56 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were considered, together with those returned by pupils in Key Stage 2 and by staff.

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

- the extent to which the attainment and progress of current pupils are continuing the improvements seen in 2009
- whether enough pupils reach the higher levels
- the extent to which provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved.

Information about the school

Most pupils at this smaller-than-average primary school are from White British backgrounds. A small, but growing, proportion is learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and no pupil is in receipt of a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The headteacher was appointed in March 2009. The school has Healthy Schools and Investors in People status.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, the school's improvement, noted in its last inspection, continues at pace. High-quality provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit, a considerable strength of the school, ensures that children get off to a flying start. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve well and enjoy school because they are provided with good teaching and an interesting and enjoyable curriculum. By the end of Year 6, levels of attainment are above average. Most parents are very supportive of the school, one commenting, 'We couldn't speak highly enough of my child's experience so far.'

Pupils make good progress in their all-round development. They learn well because lessons are well organised, supportive and productive, and teachers plan carefully to meet their differing needs. Pupils behave well, work hard and enjoy very positive relationships. Improved results in the 2009 assessments in Year 6 showed that pupils made good progress to reach above-average levels of attainment. Pupils' progress continues to accelerate, although occasional inconsistencies in teaching, for example in the pace of lessons or in the way that teachers check on pupils' understanding, mean that some unevenness in progress remains. Nevertheless, the work in pupils' books, lessons and the school's assessment records confirm that pupils make good progress, and those currently in Year 6 are on track to sustain the improvement seen in 2009.

The school takes good care of pupils. Improved provision for the few pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that they make good progress. Sensitive and timely support, in and out of lessons, helps them to gain in confidence and independence, and they play a full part in the life of the class. Pupils of all abilities appreciate the support they receive, one saying of his relationship with the staff, 'We're a team. There is no difference between us.' Good planning for personal, social and health education, reflected in Healthy Schools status, ensures that pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The school functions as a very cohesive community. Plans to formalise the promotion of community cohesion beyond the local area are at an early stage. Pupils learn about a range of faiths and cultures, but their knowledge of cultures other than their own is patchy.

The headteacher, well supported by staff and governors, keeps a close check on the school's performance. They have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses, and areas for development are tackled robustly. Their success in raising pupils' attainment, accelerating their progress and improving systems to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities shows they are well placed to sustain further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the quality of teaching and learning to the level of the best by ironing out inconsistencies in the pace of lessons and the ongoing assessment of pupils' understanding.
 - Raise pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own and implement plans for promoting community cohesion beyond the local area.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' attainment when they first start school covers a broad range but, overall, it is broadly typical of children of this age. Assessment results in Year 2 rose in 2009, matching the improvement found in Year 6, and were above average. Pupils currently in Year 2 are performing at similar levels. Across the school, pupils work hard in lessons although, occasionally, in whole-class discussions, some pupils sit back and let others answer questions. This is not always identified by teachers and this contributes to the occasionally uneven pace of learning. Nevertheless, there is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils. The small number of pupils who are new to learning English make good progress because they are well supported in lessons, sometimes with one-to-one attention from an adult. This works well and pupils soon gain confidence. The few pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable also make good progress. More-able pupils are challenged well in most lessons. As a result, a good proportion of pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach the higher Level 5, and their work in books and lessons reveals many examples of high-quality writing. In an outstanding lesson, Year 6 pupils showed a mature understanding of how writing can be modified and improved to sharpen its impact.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development is underpinned by a strong Christian ethos. They respond well to opportunities to reflect quietly in assemblies. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school and the wider community. Older pupils very much enjoy acting as 'buddies' to help younger children settle in, or 'young leaders', who help to provide sports activities at lunchtime. The school council is becoming increasingly influential. Pupils' good progress in basic skills means they are well prepared for their future lives. Their behaviour in and out of lessons is often exemplary, although a few become restless when asked to sit for too long. Attendance levels are average, and figures for the current year show that the rate is rising. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and this adds to their enjoyment.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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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
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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and support staff work well together to meet pupils' differing needs. This was seen to particularly good effect in an outstanding lesson in Year 1, where pupils learned to solve mathematical problems. Here, astute support enabled pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make rapid progress. Teachers' planning is detailed about what pupils are expected to learn and, in the best lessons, pupils are actively involved in agreeing how they will measure their success. Across the school, marking is good and this ensures that pupils have a good understanding of how well they are learning and how they can improve. Lessons usually move at a brisk pace although, occasionally, pupils are asked to sit for too long on the carpet, which limits their progress. Teachers usually question well and they use this information to check on pupils' understanding. On a few occasions, this ongoing assessment is not sharp enough to enable teachers to modify the activities or tackle misunderstandings.

The school has rightly identified the need to make more creative links between subjects and this work is under way. Good planning for literacy and numeracy contributes to pupils' good progress, and provision for information and communication technology has improved. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits and visitors. Good use is made of the expertise of staff, parents and visiting specialists to enhance pupils' opportunities outside of lessons. Systems to care for pupils and ensure their safety have improved since the last inspection and this is valued by parents and their children. Pupils are well known to staff, who keep a close check on their welfare. Those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are well supported and procedures to

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protect pupils and assess potential risks are thorough. Processes to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well organised and this contributes to their good progress.

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 form a strong team that, together with the governing body, has been instrumental in the school's improvement. Leaders know the school well and other staff are increasingly involved in monitoring activities, through the newly established 'faculty' system. Their commitment to staff development is reflected in the achievement of Investors in People status. Staff share their leaders' ambition to provide the best for pupils. They ensure that all groups are fully included and valued, and any discrimination is tackled ruthlessly. The governing body is well organised and governors have taken good steps to increase their influence on monitoring, evaluation and planning for improvement.

The school has established good links with parents, provides them with good information about their children's progress and is expanding its range of 'family learning' opportunities. Good links with outside agencies contribute strongly to the progress made by potentially vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Effective links with the attendance and improvement officer are helping to reduce absences. Systems to safeguard pupils are thorough and accurate records are maintained, although some of the documentation is still relatively new and has not yet been reviewed. The school has a good understanding of the community it serves and promotes community cohesion well within it. There are appropriate plans to develop links and extend its impact further afield, but these are at an early stage of implementation.

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

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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

The Early Years Foundation Stage unit has made great strides since it was founded after the last inspection. Children are fully included in all the offers and, from the moment they arrive at the start of the day, children in Nursery and Reception thrive in the warm, friendly and supportive environment. Children make rapid progress in their personal development and learning because the staff provide an interesting, exciting and stimulating range of activities, often built around a central theme. These build well on children's interests and are very well matched to their differing needs and abilities. Staff ensure a very good balance between activities led by an adult and opportunities for children to choose for themselves. Staff lead group activities well. They question perceptively and their observations are recorded carefully to form the basis of very useful and celebratory 'learning journeys'. Nursery children listen very carefully and are very keen to count fruit, sound out their names, describe how they feel and use them to make attractive prints. In an outstanding session in Reception, children had a great sense of achievement as they counted tangerines and worked out how many were hidden. Very good use is made of the outdoor area and this is supplemented by regular access to the hall and school playground. Children play together extremely well, use wheeled vehicles very sensibly, enjoy exploring the properties of sand, sow seeds and build imaginative models using construction kit. There are plentiful opportunities for role play and a strong premium is placed on promoting speaking and listening. Consequently, the large majority of children progress beyond the expected levels in each area of learning by the end of Reception. There is a very strong sense of teamwork, under the excellent guidance of the unit leader, and a successful emphasis on securing children's health, safety and welfare.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents are very supportive. All those who returned the questionnaire indicate that they are happy with their child's experience and the school keeps them informed about their child's progress, provides good teaching and is well led and managed. Few disagreed with the statements included in the consultation. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Catherine's Church of England 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 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 146 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	68	15	27	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	86	7	13	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	54	26	46	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	64	17	30	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	64	18	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	55	23	41	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	57	20	36	3	5	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)	26	48	24	44	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	52	24	43	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	66	14	25	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	42	31	56	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	61	22	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	61	21	38	0	0	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 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



29 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's Church of England Primary School, Ware, SG12 0AW

I am writing to thank you for being so friendly when we visited your school recently and to tell you what we found out. A special thank you goes to those of you who met with us to give us your views. You were very helpful.

Many of you told us, and your parents agreed, that you go to a good school, and we agree. You are making good progress with your learning and are reaching above-average standards. The staff take good care of you and, because of this, you feel safe and able to learn. Your teachers make lessons interesting and fun. We could see that you try hard with your work, although we noticed that some of you do not put up your hands to answer your teacher's questions. We were very pleased to see that you behave well in lessons, and your behaviour in assemblies and around the school is impressive. Well done, and please keep this up. The children in Nursery and Reception are doing very well - thank you to you 'buddies' who help them to settle in.

Although your school is good, your headteacher, staff and governors are determined that it will get even better. We have asked them to do two things.

We want them to always make sure that you do not spend too long sitting on the carpet, and to keep checking that you understand your work during lessons.

We want you to learn more about people from different cultures in the United Kingdom and around the world, and how people from different backgrounds get along.

We know you will want to help. Please keep working hard and behaving well - and please put up your hand to answer questions and make suggestions!

Yours sincerely

Keith Williams

Lead inspector

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