

St Alphege Church of England Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118659
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339270
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Vince
Headteacher	Lorraine Clayden
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, spending 60% of the time looking at learning, eight teachers in total were observed. held meetings with representative groups of governors, staff and children, and spoke to parents and carers available at the beginning of the day. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's improvement plans, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 65 parent and 22 staff questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- How well pupils are achieving, particularly in writing.
- The action the school takes to improve attendance.
- How effective staff are in identifying weaknesses and bringing about improvement.

Information about the school

St Alphege is an average sized infant school, with 92 children in the Nursery and Reception Years. Nursery classes have been opened since the last inspection. The headteacher took up her post at the beginning of the academic year. An above average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A high proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including speech and language, behavioural, emotional and social and learning difficulties. The majority of pupils are from White British families with very few from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has Healthy School, Active Mark and Safe School awards. The school has a breakfast club and a private provider runs after-school care for pupils attending schools within the local cluster.

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

St Alphege is a good school where children make a good start to their education. One parental comment typical of many sums up the school's strengths: 'It is very obvious that teachers genuinely care for their pupils and have their best interests at heart, both academically and socially.' The welcoming school environment helps pupils to enjoy school, respect each other and behave well. They are keen to succeed. As a result of the highly effective safeguarding procedures and adults' care and support, children feel exceptionally safe and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

The very effective and perceptive leadership of the headteacher has been central to maintaining high staff morale during a period of transition. She has been given good support by experienced and highly effective governors. Good leadership and management across the school are seen in the shared and ongoing commitment to school improvement. This builds well on the significant strengths evident when the school was last inspected and is raising standards. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Staff have effective skills and understanding of where developments will have the greatest impact to give the school a good capacity for further development.

Many children start school with skills and abilities which are well below the levels expected for their age. They achieve well throughout the school and make good progress. Attainment varies from year to year because of differing abilities and ages in each year group, but attainment by the end of Year 2 is generally in line with national averages, and sometimes above average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from effective systems that quickly identify what support is needed, and they make good progress from their starting points. Pupils' attainment, good personal skills and enthusiasm for learning provide them with a good basis for further learning. However, in spite of the sustained efforts of school staff, the attendance of a few pupils is poor and this hampers their progress. Pupils' reading and numeracy skills are stronger than their writing skills because pupils are not always required to write enough in the time allowed or given opportunities to review and improve what they have done. Teaching is consistently good and the curriculum effectively engages pupils so that learning is practically based and fun. Pupils enjoy the excellent range of lunchtime clubs. Teachers give pupils good encouragement through their marking, and have begun to give more opportunities to help pupils to understand the next steps in their learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve attainment in writing by:
 - raising the expectations of the quantity and quality of what pupils can write in the time they are given, particularly the older pupils
 - ensuring that pupils are clear about the precise skills being developed in each writing activity.
- Ensure that marking helps pupils to be clear about how their work could be better and that they are given time to make improvements.
- Raise the attendance of the few pupils who find it difficult to attend regularly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils make good progress because they are interested in their work in lessons, quickly engage in their activities and try to do their best. The small minority of children with challenging behaviour are well supported so that there is no disruption to lessons. Lesson observations showed that many pupils make considerable efforts to achieve the task set for them even when they find it difficult, for example in improving their handwriting. Pupils' performance in writing has been relatively less strong than in reading and mathematics. Although at a relatively early stage, the recent approaches taken by staff to improve writing are well thought through and early assessments show significant improvement for some pupils. These are shown particularly in better handwriting, pupils' enthusiasm to write and their understanding of their achievements and what to do next because of the 'I can' statements in pupils' books.

Children move around the school sensibly and their good behaviour contributes to their mature understanding of keeping safe. Pupils are rightly proud of the things they do to contribute to the school community, such as through the school council or as buddies for younger children. School councillors have an exceptionally good understanding of their responsibilities and their roles in representing the views of their classmates. Pupils participate keenly in events that take place in the community, such as making a street banner displayed in the town, and show their concern for others through regular fund raising. Strong links with the church, including visits from the vicar, give pupils excellent opportunities to reflect on issues in assembly, for example the arrival of a new baby. Pupils spoke about how the lighting of a candle in assembly helps them to concentrate on their own thoughts. Pupils are actively involved in looking at a variety of cultures, which very effectively extend their cultural understanding, and remember what they have learned about Hinduism and Judaism.

Pupils respond very positively to the promotion of health issues, seen in Healthy School and Active Mark awards. Many participate in the 'Walk on Wednesday' scheme and pupils understand procedures to look after their own health, such as how to use tissues to avoid the spread of infection or what to eat to stay healthy. There is an increasing take-up of school meals and good relationships ensure that midday mealtime is a valuable social occasion.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan effectively to meet the individual needs of pupils in their classes so that work is set at a level which takes learning forward systematically. The partnership between teachers and teaching assistants effectively ensures that pupils are given good levels of small group or individual support to engage them well in their learning. The consistent use of learning objectives means that pupils are clear about the purpose of the lesson, though teachers do not always remind individuals or small groups sufficiently of the relevant ongoing targets that could be an additional focus for their work.

Teachers plan work well together, using the good curriculum structure and interesting 'learning journeys' to set up really exciting activities for pupils, including opportunities to extend literacy and numeracy skills through cross-curricular work. Good use is made of outdoors, visits and visitors, information technology and a rich range of resources to enliven and bring relevance to learning. For example, a very wide range of everyday materials helped Year 1 pupils to investigate and understand their properties in a science lesson. Pupils' experiences are further enriched through additional activities, such as specialist teaching in music and French. Good strategies are used in lessons to help pupils to understand the quality of their work, such as self- and peer-assessment. Staff are currently reviewing the marking policy and have identified that currently, although marking is regular, it does not routinely identify ways in which pupils could improve their work, and that time is not set aside for pupils to try out the guidance

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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given to them at a time when it is most meaningful.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are promoted particularly effectively. Transition arrangements are extremely well organised and ensure that children move smoothly through each phase. Teachers and support staff use a range of intervention programmes and work very closely with children's families to promote pupils' emotional well-being when their circumstances make them vulnerable. Actions are often taken in conjunction with other agencies and record keeping is meticulous, ensuring an ongoing record of the outcome of action taken. Such action enables all groups of pupils to develop the self-confidence that helps them to make good academic progress. The school has good systems and a rigorous approach to encourage regular attendance, but has not been able to eradicate persistent absence within a few families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership team is effective and members are good role models in promoting high expectations. All staff are empowered to contribute to school development and subject leaders are involved in evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' attainment. This gives staff a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development, for example in the current review of the school's marking policy. Data collection and analysis are used well to decide on which areas require improvement. Governors take an active role in ensuring that they know how well the school is doing and have many practical links to help them to understand the school's work. Procedures for governance are well organised and thorough, and help governors to fulfil their responsibilities outstandingly well, for example the governors' development plan and robust induction support for new governors.

Safeguarding procedures are outstanding in ensuring the health and safety of pupils and staff. Regular training for staff in child protection issues ensures that they are alert to emerging needs. The school has good partnerships with parents seen in the proactive support provided by the parent teacher association. Opportunities for parental involvement are being increased steadily, for example in giving parents more information about the curriculum so that all parents can be involved in activities which meet their child's needs. A range of family learning programmes are in place to help parents give their children the support they need at home. The promotion of equal opportunities and tackling discrimination is at the heart of the school's work. Good

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monitoring arrangements ensure that pupils' progress is tracked regularly and action taken immediately if any individual or group is seen to need additional support. For example, additional teaching groups are planned to promote boys' writing, which currently is less strong than that of girls. The school takes advantage of every possible opportunity to work with other agencies to improve expertise and opportunities in the school, shown in hosting before- and after-school provision for neighbouring schools, and in the 'Walking Bus' scheme. Staff and governors have a very good understanding of the school's context and actively promote community cohesion within the school and more widely. The school's action plan details a series of additional steps to be taken over time, many of which are appropriately designed to broaden pupils' appreciation of diversity and awareness of human rights.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of children enter Nursery or Reception with skills significantly lower than the expected levels for their age, particularly in their speech and language development. Children, including those with identified additional needs, make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1, most children's attainment is still a little below average. Good leadership ensures excellent welfare and personal development for children which provides a secure basis for more formal learning in Year 1. Children feel safe, behave well and understand the need for rules and routines. Activities in the Nursery and Reception are varied and cover all areas of learning. Adults ensure that the environment is stimulating and both indoor and outdoor space is used effectively to encourage learning. Adults model language very clearly for the children, most effectively when

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teachers encourage children to extend their vocabulary through discussion in practical activities. This was very apparent when a group of children were making 'feedballs' to feed the birds during a teacher-led session. Sometimes opportunities are missed to extend children's language development even further by requiring pupils to engage in conversations together. Parents are very appreciative of provision in the Nursery and Reception Years. One parent said, 'The staff here are amazing. My child is very happy.'

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

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about St Alphege. They express very high levels of satisfaction in the leadership of the school and how their children are prepared for the future. A very small minority of parents expressed concern that unacceptable behaviour was not dealt with effectively, although some indicated in their comments that this may have been the case in the past. The inspection team found that pupils are very well managed, particularly those who have identified behaviour and emotional needs, and that behaviour overall is good and in many lessons outstanding. A couple of comments indicated that parents would like more advance notice of activities and this issue is already being addressed through more regular newsletters. Parents' and carers' positive views reflect the findings of this inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Alphege 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 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 189 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	89	6	9	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	55	85	10	15	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	55	28	43	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	62	25	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	75	16	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	69	18	28	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	68	21	32	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)	31	48	28	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	63	23	35	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	57	20	31	3	5	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	57	25	38	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	46	71	18	28	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	72	18	28	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 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.



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18 January 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of St Alphege Church of England Primary School, Whitstable, CT5 1DA

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit and the help you gave us when we spoke together. You will be pleased to know that we agree that you attend a good school. These are some of the things we thought were really good about the school.

- You make good progress because you are taught well and work hard.
- You behave well and this helps the school to be a pleasant place for you to work and play together.
- Adults take excellent care of you and help you to know how to be fit and healthy.
- You know that you are safe and this helps you to enjoy being in school.
- Many of you help others well in the school and outside by being on the school council or as buddies.

Part of our job is to suggest things that will make the school even better. These are the things we have asked the adults to do to help you even more, particularly in writing:

- Make sure that older pupils are expected to write as much as they can in lessons.
- Remind you of your targets for each writing task.
- Tell you what you can do to make your work better and give you some time to try this out.

A few of you do not attend school as regularly as you should and can help by trying to come more often.

We wish you all well for the future and hope that you will continue to be happy at school and try your best.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

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