

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Halstead

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115133
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311851
Inspection dates	8–9 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Roger Fry

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 on roll	
School	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Remfry
Headteacher	Mr Craig Duncan
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Mathews Close Halstead Essex CO9 2BH
Telephone number	01787475699
Fax number	01787478477

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	8–9 May 2008
Inspection number	311851

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is of average size and draws pupils from Halstead and the surrounding area. Pupils are almost entirely from White British backgrounds and virtually all speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. The proportion known to qualify for free school meals is well below average.

The school has the Activemark and Healthy School awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Andrew's is a school that welcomes all pupils and provides a good education for them. It has outstanding aspects in the care and support for pupils, its links with other schools and organisations, in pupils' enjoyment of schooling and their understanding of staying healthy. The school's leaders set a clear direction for improvement based on thorough investigations into trends and patterns in pupils' progress. The strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has lifted the performance of the school again this year and the school is well placed to make further improvements. Many parents acknowledge how well their children are doing in all aspects of their work.

Pupils make good progress from their starting points to the end of Year 6. Most children's attainment on entry to school is similar to children nationally. The provision in the Foundation Stage is good. They make good progress in Reception because activities are well organised. Most children reach the standards expected by Year 1 and a significant minority exceeds them. In Years 2 and 6, pupils are on course to reach above average standards in English and mathematics. Pupils are achieving well this year. Reading standards are a particular strength because pupils have many interests and want to find out more. Standards in Year 6 were average last year, and the lower performance reflected gaps in pupils' knowledge from previous years.

Standards in mathematics have been slightly lower than in English, because for example, many pupils find answering problems demanding. The gap between boys' and girls' achievement is closing this year, because teachers give greater attention to lessons that interest boys. This aspect is still a priority for further improvement. Pupils' standards in physical education and the arts are higher than average, because lessons follow exciting themes and there is an exceptional range of clubs.

The teaching is good. Pupils make good progress this year because teachers, typically, plan well to meet their needs. The small group activities for pupils who find learning difficult are helping them make good progress. Pupils say that teachers make lessons interesting and they are highly motivated as a result. The banner above one classroom door says, 'Individually we're unique, collectively we're awesome', and reflects pupils' collective enjoyment and confidence. Pupils' personal development is good. They are developing the capacity to make realistic assessments of their own achievements and to set themselves goals to drive their own learning effectively. The school is forward looking and a good curriculum teaches the skills well that pupils will need to become effective members of society in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There is a good focus on personal, social and emotional development in the first months in school and, as a result, children settle quickly and feel safe, secure and confident. The provision is well managed and adults provide a good balance of activities. Visits and visitors extend children's understanding of the world around them effectively. A visit to the Halstead shops, including the bakery, was followed successfully by bread-making in school. Good use is made of the outdoor area. Ride-on toys encourage good cooperative play. Literacy and numeracy are well organised through play based activities, such as at the 'Post Office', in the role-play area and during teacher-led sessions. The children enjoy their learning and actively engage with it. Assessments of children's progress track their development and lesson planning is

effective. Use of photographs, to encourage children's self-awareness and reflection about what they have done, is a satisfactory and developing feature.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of boys by finding ways to engage them more fully in their work.
- Raise pupils' achievement in mathematics, especially in problem solving.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils this year, including those who need extra help with their learning, are making good progress. Pupils who find learning difficult typically reach national standards by the end of Year 6. In Year 2, pupils are on course again to reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Reading standards are a particular strength across the school. Standards in mathematics at both key stages have been slightly lower than in English. Pupils, for example, are not as good at understanding how to answer problems as they are at other aspects of mathematics and girls can lack confidence in their abilities to do well in the subject.

Girls perform better than boys generally and boys' standards last year were lower than boys nationally. The gap is closing this year, but to maintain this improvement boys' standards of work are still a priority for improvement. Standards in Year 6 were average last year, after pupils reached well above average standards the year before. This year pupils in Year 6 are again making good progress from their starting points. They are on course to reach their above average targets in English and mathematics, which are challenging for the group. Standards in science continue to keep pace with other subjects. Pupils' standards in physical education (PE) and art are higher than average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of healthy lifestyles and enjoy their time in school very much indeed. They describe it as, 'fantastic', and 'exciting'. Hence, attendance is good and they behave well. In lessons and during breaks they are polite, considerate and helpful and this contributes significantly to the positive atmosphere in school. Their good sense of community is evident in assemblies where they develop a good understanding of spiritual, social and moral issues, reflecting the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils' understanding of people's lives in other places in the United Kingdom is less well advanced. The school council actively contributes to the school community by making suggestions for improvement and pupils have raised funds for charities and for school equipment. Older pupils take pride in their positions as 'play leaders' and 'playground friends' and take the responsibilities awarded to them seriously. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. They feel secure in school and have a good understanding of keeping safe. 'Anti bullying week' helps pupils recognise and respond to what they consider are isolated and minor incidents.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers make lessons interesting, such as in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 where pupils threaded colourful beads to help them recognise pairs of numbers that add up to 10. Pupils enjoy this

practical approach because they like trying out their own ideas and working with a partner. Adults give positive verbal feedback to pupils, share lesson targets with them at the start of lessons and often revise the targets at the end. End of lesson summaries to revise key learning points are not consistently used in all lessons. Teachers ensure that pupils are engaged in learning and behaviour management is positive, but occasionally boys start work too slowly. Classrooms are lively and stimulating and teachers use interactive whiteboards well in lessons to engage and interest pupils. Teachers assess and track pupils' progress with increasing thoroughness. Pupils value the helpful individual targets they are given, for example in English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum develops pupils' knowledge and skills in literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT) effectively. The range of visitors and visits enlivens learning, such as the creation of jungle scenes around the school by visiting artists working with pupils. Pupils have studied aspects of geography and science through conservation themes, which they have enjoyed and found meaningful to their lives. The very wide range of after school clubs, supported by parents and other organisations, with strong emphases on the arts, good health, fitness and participation is an outstanding feature of the school. The interest amongst pupils in attending clubs is very high. The school provides well for pupils' emotional well-being through the positive emphasis on personal, social and health education. The curriculum meets the needs of those who need extra support with their learning well. The school makes adequate extra provision for the most able pupils and plans to do more.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Displays around the school make its core aims explicit and show that high quality learning is valued. Teachers involve pupils in self-assessment activities very well and pupils understand the importance of academic and personal targets to drive their learning forward. This process promotes highly successful dialogue between teachers and pupils and makes an extremely positive contribution to the quality of their learning. The school is exceptionally active in using outside organisations to support pupils' learning. Pastoral care and personal support are excellent. Pupils new to the school say how quickly they settle in and that they soon have friends. There is something for everyone at all levels. Sports, art, choir and instrumental activities allow pupils to find success whatever their talents. The school meets national requirements for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are good. This school knows itself well. Based on the positive response to issues in pupils' performances from last year and the developing positive qualities of the school, it has a good capacity to improve further. Staff have identified areas of relative weakness and are working to improve the teaching of mathematics and to consolidate the improvement in the performances of boys. Teachers' assessments show that pupils are on track to reach their challenging targets this year.

Initiatives to improve pupils' writing have been very well led and standards have risen. Staff work together well as a team so that expertise is shared increasingly effectively across the school. There is variation in the quality of subject leadership, but changes are happening with increasing consistency. Governors are active as 'critical friends'. They take a close interest in what happens in school and ask the leadership what it is doing and why. The school shares expertise, solutions to common problems and a very extensive PE programme with local schools exceptionally well.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
--	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Andrew's C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School, Halstead, CO9 2BH

It was good to meet so many of you and to listen to your views. This letter is to give you a flavour of what is in our full report.

Here are some of the good features of your school.

- You make a good start to school life in Reception.
- You make good progress from Reception to Year 6 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Your work in ICT, PE and art is good too.
- You enjoy school very much because teachers and other adults care for you so well and help you to learn. So many of you take part in the clubs.
- You get on well with one another and those of you with responsibilities carry them out with pride.
- Your head and deputy headteacher, the staff and governors work well as a team to improve your school.
- Your behaviour is good and you have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy.
- The school council makes good suggestions to improve the school.

Your headteacher and I have noticed that there are things that the school can do to improve. I have asked your headteacher to:

- help raise the achievement of boys by finding ways to engage you more fully in your work
- raise your achievement in mathematics by helping you do better in the areas you find most difficult, such as answering problems.

I hope that you will all keep on working hard, particularly in mathematics.

Yours sincerely

Roger Fry

Lead inspector