

Albury C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 117419 |
| Local Authority | HERTFORDSHIRE |
| Inspection number | 290829 |
| Inspection dates | 2–3 July 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Ruth Frith |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | 52 |
| School | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Lynn Archer |
| Headteacher | Mrs Anne Atherton |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4 March 2002 |
| School address | Church End Albury Nr. Ware Hertfordshire SG11 2JQ |
| Telephone number | 01279 771253 |
| Fax number | 01279 771253 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small village school with three mixed age classes and a Foundation Stage. Whilst some pupils live in the village, a significant number comes from surrounding villages and further afield. Families represent a range of socio-economic backgrounds and the percentage receiving free school meals is below average. Pupils' attainment on entry to school varies year-on-year but is slightly below what is typical for this age group. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is slightly below national average, although there is a higher than average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. Nearly all pupils come from White British backgrounds. In some years there is high pupil mobility and many pupils join or leave the school part way through their primary education. Staffing consists of one full-time newly qualified teacher, the headteacher who teaches for half of the week, two further part-time teachers and a Foundation Stage practitioner in the Nursery.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education within a very welcoming and friendly atmosphere where children enjoy their education. It has particular strengths in providing for pupils' personal development and well-being, their care, guidance and support and in the curriculum. Although many significant improvements have been made since the last inspection, change has not been as quick as it needed to have been due to the heavy teaching commitment of the headteacher. However, this is an improving school and recent developments are beginning to impact positively on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

Pupils make satisfactory progress and by the time they leave school reach standards that are broadly average. They become happy learners in the Foundation Stage but staff recognise the need to continue to develop their practice further to make the best use of time. Throughout the school, pupils' writing is the weakest area, due in some part to the comparatively weak communication skills of some children on entry to school. The limited range and use of vocabulary restricts their writing and affects their spelling. Although teaching is only satisfactory overall, due to inconsistencies in the pace of learning and teachers' expectations, there are many good features. Staff are successful at identifying those pupils who find learning difficult, and provide them with effective support.

The curriculum is good. Staff are particularly successful at widening pupils' horizons by providing a variety of school visits as well as a residential trip each year for all Key Stage 2 pupils. Pupils make friends and play and work together well. Because they enjoy what they are doing, they behave well, develop responsible attitudes and show consideration for the views of others. They learn how to stay safe and healthy and contribute well to the school and wider community. Pupils' care, guidance and support are also good and pupils feel safe in school. Consequently, they develop into confident learners and are well prepared for the next stage of education.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but the headteacher and governors have shown recent good leadership, giving a clear direction to the school and improving provision. A school hall to be built later in the year is due to their foresight, prudent financial management and the exceptional support from staff and parents. Satisfactory monitoring and evaluation of the school have resulted in a clear agenda for improvement. Priorities reflect those highlighted in the inspection although some evaluations are slightly more generous. More time has been allocated for the headteacher's leadership and management roles. This, together with other recent developments, has ensured that the school has the capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by improving speaking, listening and spelling.
- Extend the strengths in teaching across the school to bring a greater consistency in teaching and learning.
- Build on the recent changes in the Foundation Stage-3 to ensure good progress across all areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Published national test results indicate that over recent years pupils have achieved satisfactorily throughout their time in school. However, observations of lessons, discussions with pupils and

a scrutiny of their work show a recent increase in their rate of progress, particularly for the older pupils. Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage but not all reach standards that are expected nationally by the time they enter Year 1. In the 2006 national assessments at Year 2 and Year 6, standards were broadly average in English and mathematics. The school reached its targets in English and mathematics. Similarly, pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6 are generally working at average levels, although Year 2 pupils' reading is significantly higher than previous years. Those with learning difficulties make good progress and sometimes achieve standards higher than those seen nationally for similar pupils. This is due to the good support from teachers and teaching assistants provided in these small classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and helps to create a friendly and supportive school ethos. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in the very high rate of attendance. Because their attitudes to school are good and they enjoy what they do, pupils behave well. A few of the younger boys become excited easily and need clearer messages to maintain their concentration. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of how to live healthy lives and this is influencing what they do. Fitness levels are raised through their involvement in a good range of physical activities. All but a few pupils take part in additional sport or dance clubs. Pupils understand the need to eat a healthy diet and the school supports this through the provision of healthy lunches. Many pupils have a hot or packed school lunch. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe. They recognise that bullying is wrong and know what to do if they see unacceptable behaviour. If they have a particular concern they use the 'Concerns Box' or talk to a member of staff. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community through the school council and acting as hosts to the local 'Sixty-Plus' club. Older pupils act responsibly through becoming buddies, 'Albury heroes' and play leaders to help others during play and lunchtimes and those children new to the school. Activities such as these make a sound contribution to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching remains only satisfactory because sometimes in lessons the pace of learning slows and expectations are not as high as they should be. Consequently, pupils' progress varies. Strong teamwork helps to meet the varying needs of pupils in the mixed-age classes. Staff regularly assess how pupils are doing and what they have achieved. This information is used successfully to build on previous learning. Planning has improved so that pupils experience an improved range of activities and they know what they are expected to learn. Relationships are good so the atmosphere encourages pupils to tackle new work confidently and ask for support, when necessary. Staff have recently developed their expertise in information and communication technology (ICT) and are confidently using the interactive whiteboards. Pupils say this helps them to understand more easily and makes learning interesting. Teachers are not yet as successful in teaching writing as other subjects but improvements are beginning to be seen in pupils' books.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A key strength of the curriculum is the way in which it encourages pupils to enjoy learning. Areas of study are regularly reviewed to meet the changing needs of the pupils and make the best use of part-time staff and teachers' expertise, for example, in science, physical education (PE) and geography. Pupils have the opportunity to work in a range of settings throughout the week and the larger class size for Key Stage 2 pupils at the end of the week prepares them well for secondary education. The successful personal, social and health education programme ensures that pupils know how to keep safe and healthy and learn to get on with others. The focus on pupils' immediate environment, which encourages learning in literacy, science, history, art and PE, for example, helps improve their spiritual and cultural awareness. Pupils also develop their skills of citizenship through the school council and becoming involved in recycling and composting activities. Popular clubs and activities help pupils to develop new interests and extend skills. School visits and visitors add another dimension to pupils' learning, when they are offered a more 'hands on' experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

New pupils settle happily into the school because of the caring atmosphere it provides. Pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem due to the good relationships and opportunities to try out new things in a supportive environment. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good and helps to support their progress. Those that are failing to thrive are identified and the school works well with specialist agencies to ensure their needs are met. Systems to safeguard pupils and ensure their safety are robust. Realistic targets are set and pupils say that these help them to know how to improve their work. Some of this work is new and, although initial findings are positive, their full effect is yet to be seen.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are well focussed on promoting pupils' personal development and well-being, improving the quality of provision and raising standards. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has successfully created a team who share her vision and are keen to improve their practice. All are becoming more involved in school development. There are satisfactory systems for checking how well the school is doing and identifying appropriate priorities for improvement. The system for tracking pupils' progress and setting targets has recently been improved and is successful in identifying where more challenge or support is needed. Governors are very supportive of the school and are fully involved in school development and evaluation through their visits and work in committee. Most parents are pleased with what the school offers.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| 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 behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 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 | 3 |

The quality of provision

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|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| 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? | 2 |

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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| 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 |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

5 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Albury C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School, Albury, Nr. Ware, Hertfordshire, SG11 2JQ

You may remember that I recently visited your school to find out what you learn. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. I enjoyed talking to you and being in your lessons. These are some of the things I liked best.

- You enjoy school and make good friends. You work well together and help each other with your learning.
- Because you are interested in what you are doing you behave well and develop good attitudes to school.
- Your attendance is much higher than I often see. Well done!
- You know how to stay healthy by eating a good diet and having plenty of exercise.
- You really enjoy the school clubs and visits.
- You particularly enjoy using computers and think learning is more interesting when teachers use the interactive whiteboards.
- Staff look after you so you feel safe. I was pleased to hear that you would go to a member of staff if you had any problems and understand what to do if any bullying took place.

I have spoken with Mrs Atherton, the staff and governors and we have agreed that they need to help you to improve your writing, particularly your spelling, and make sure that you make consistently good progress. They will do this by continuing to make lessons interesting and ensuring that you always work as hard as you can. I hope you help them with this. Staff are also going to keep improving what they do for the youngest children so that they make a good start as possible in school.

Thank you once again and I wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith

Lead Inspector