

Hertford St Andrew CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117397
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326598
Inspection date	22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Brown

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	119
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms J Maurice
Headteacher	Mr Ron Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Calton Avenue Hertford Hertfordshire SG14 2EP

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	22 January 2009
Inspection number	326598

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the pupils' personal care, guidance and well being, and the effectiveness of the leadership and management. Inspectors gathered evidence from observing work in classrooms, scrutinising school documentation and pupils' work, and from discussions with a governor, the headteacher, staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. An above average proportion of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Most children are from White British backgrounds, with a small proportion from a range of other backgrounds, but relatively few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above that usually found, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is close to average. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is in two classes, a part-time Nursery class and a full-time Reception class. The attainment of children when they start school varies widely, but attainment on entry to the EYFS is generally well below that nationally expected for children of this age.

There is onsite childcare provision in the form of a part time pre-school class that is not managed by the governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

At the last inspection, the school was judged to be a good school with some outstanding features. Staff have worked very hard since then and the standards attained by pupils have risen year-on-year. By the end of Year 6, standards are now above those expected in the subjects of English and mathematics and well above in science. However, this school does not just have a narrow focus on academic attainment. Staff work hard to instil confidence in the pupils and build their ambition for what they can achieve in life. As a result, the standard of education and the care pupils receive is now outstanding. In this school, both pupils and adults delight in each other's company. They share in celebrating their successes and from time-to-time, make mistakes, but learn from these and move on. 'The way children and adults treat each other is fantastic,' observed one Year 6 pupil. Another commented, 'The education we get is great - amazing!'

The Christian values of the school are evident in all its work. Pupils and adults consistently display great courtesy and a high level of respect and care for each other and their environment. It is a school with a warm, welcoming atmosphere where there is lots of fun and enjoyment.

Pupils make outstanding progress during their time at the school. After a good start in the EYFS, pupils reach standards at the end of Year 2 that are below those expected nationally. Nevertheless, this is still a significant improvement on their starting point, and the groundwork that is established at this stage gives them a very firm platform to build on their learning throughout Key Stage 2. Consequently, their achievements by the time they leave are outstanding. The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is used most effectively by all staff to check that pupils are doing as well as possible and to target the significant numbers who need extra help with learning. Therefore, these pupils make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and their self-esteem is high.

Pupil's personal development is outstanding. They display a level of thoughtfulness and maturity that is remarkable and are unafraid to ask questions, or to use their initiative. Their behaviour is outstanding. Older pupils in particular, make an excellent contribution to school life, taking on a wide range responsibilities with great enthusiasm. They take a lead in many aspects of the day-to-day running of the school and thrive on the trust that is placed in them. Pupils coordinate and support lunchtime activities, running clubs for the younger ones, and acting as play leaders and organisers. They are in charge of many aspects of daily assemblies, setting out the hall, choosing music, controlling the digital sound desk and leading announcements. One pupil, the school ambassador, takes the lead in welcoming visitors. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is seen in many ways, not least, their knowledgeable and respectful attitudes to other cultures and beliefs. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and keep themselves and each other safe. They make a very significant contribution to their own, the local, and the wider community in numerous ways. These include an impressive commitment to environmental issues and substantial funds raised for charities at home and abroad. Pupils get an excellent preparation for the future world of work. This is a consequence of their outstanding progress in basic skills, excellent social skills, and an outstanding ability to work together in teams, or when appropriate, to use their individual initiative.

Pupils' enjoyment and delight in school cannot be doubted. It bubbles through in classrooms and in their excitement at telling visitors about their experiences. Most pupils have excellent

levels of attendance, at times insisting on coming to school against the wishes of the parents when they believe their children are not well enough. However, despite the concerted efforts and support of staff, attendance at the school for a small number of persistent absentees is an issue.

The impact of teaching on the quality of pupils' learning is outstanding. Every adult has very high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. With outstanding relationships at every level, the quality of interactions is excellent. There is a first-rate pace to the school day, pupils get on with their work, concentrate well and are engaged and involved in learning. Teachers and teaching assistants make great use of the school's high quality assessment and tracking systems to ensure that all pupils, whatever their needs and abilities are challenged and achieve success.

Teachers are given a great deal of freedom to make the way in which they present the curriculum, relevant and interesting to the pupils. As a result, pupils are tremendously enthusiastic and excited about their work. Nevertheless, there is a structure and system to the school's work for monitoring the curriculum provision. This ensures pupils get an extremely broad and balanced diet of learning experiences that significantly boost their skills and confidence. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors gives strong reinforcement to the pupils learning. Year 6 pupils are still excited and eloquent about the quality of experiences they had on their residential visit at the start of this school year.

All staff have a very high level of commitment to encouraging pupils' enjoyment and achievement as well as their health and well-being. The school works well with other agencies to help pupils and their families. Strong links with the local community ensure that should difficulties occur outside school, these can be dealt with in school. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and carefully managed. The systems for tracking pupils' progress help to ensure that all learners, including those needing extra help with learning and the few for whom English is an additional language, receive the support they need. Gifted, able and talented pupils get many opportunities to shine and excel. Pupils know their personal targets, something several parents of the younger pupils commented approvingly on. Older pupils take the advice and guidance they are given very seriously. They not only know what they need to do to achieve ambitious levels, but are certain they will get the support and help when they need it.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Excellent management systems support the work of staff very effectively. For example, the pupil progress tracking system is used highly effectively by teachers and the leadership to analyse pupil and school performance. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and rigorously. Much of the staff's continued training is conducted in school and has been important in the school's success in the raising standards since the last inspection. The successful evolution of practice over the past three years also owes much to the high level of the formal and informal professional debate that takes place in the school. The quality of school self-evaluation process is good, although the leadership tends to underestimate the impact of the achievements, being very self-critical. The staff are working hard to promote high quality community cohesion; in school the equality of opportunity is excellent, but staff recognise that there is still more work needed to develop the pupils' national and global perspective. Governance is good. Governors know the school well and take an active role within it. They are not afraid to question to see if the school can do even better. Given the history of improvement and the high level of success the school has achieved, the capacity for further improvement is excellent.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The EYFS provides a secure environment ensuring children settle quickly and happily into school. Staff look after children with great care and attention so that children feel safe. The development of language skills and extending vocabulary is a high priority and children benefit from having adults play with them in role-play situations. As a result of the close attention and excellent relationships with the adults children's personal development is excellent. Teaching is good and children enjoy learning because they are provided with good opportunities to explore and discover for themselves, although the physical access to the outside play area does not yet give them sufficient freedom to always make their own choices. By the end of Reception, most children have not yet reached standards expected for their age. Nevertheless, children's achievement is good as they make significant progress in all areas of learning. Adults make careful observations of what children can do but, at present, this information is not always analysed rigorously enough to ensure that they make even better progress. The leadership of the EYFS is good, staff work as an effective team, and the self-review is accurate in identifying the areas for improvement. The partnership with parents is good. Several parents expressed their appreciation of the staff's open, friendly and caring approach.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further procedures in working with parents and carers to promote and improve the attendance of the small minority of pupils whose attendance is poor.
- Develop the use of assessment procedures and access to the outdoor areas for children in the EYFS in order to accelerate their learning.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

23 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hertford St Andrew CofE Primary School, Hertford, SG14 2EP

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. Like you, we think it is a very friendly place to be and we could see that you get on very well together. Our particular thanks to those of you who kindly talked to us and told us what you thought of the school. We found what you had to say very helpful. In return, we now want to share our findings with you.

You go to an outstanding school. The quality of your work, the way you take on responsibilities and the way you treat others are some of the reasons why it is so special. You told us that you really enjoy school and we could see why, particularly when we saw you in your classes and around school at lunchtime. You told us how well the adults care for you and everyone is welcoming. We agree with your views that the school is getting better and better. We could see that you think carefully about your work and try very hard to reach the targets your teachers set for you. We noted that standards have risen and are now above average. You make excellent progress because teachers keep a close eye on how well you are getting on. We were very impressed by your excellent manners and your ability to discuss things in a very sensible way.

We think that your school gives you a great start in life, especially the way in which you are encouraged to take on roles and responsibilities. Keep up the excellent work!

Your headteacher and staff provide excellent leadership. Nevertheless, I have asked them to do two things to make your school even better.

- Find more ways to help the small number of pupils who struggle with poor attendance. We think that you all will be able to play a very important part in doing this.
- Develop the ways in which the adults use the assessment of children's work in the Nursery and Reception classes to help the children make even better progress, and make it easier for these children to choose when they want to learn outside.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Roger Brown

Lead inspector