

St Alphege Church of England Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104090
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	323960
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Joyce Cox

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Moore
Headteacher	Jo Slough
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 May 2006
School address	New Road Solihull B91 3DW
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with the headteacher, school staff, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, pupils' work, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 82 parent questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- the factors which contribute to pupils' high attainment and they evaluated the strategies to maintain excellence in all aspects of the school's work
- curriculum developments and how effectively the curriculum is designed and modified to meet the needs of all learners
- how successfully new staff are integrated into the school and how good practice in teaching and learning is shared
- the extent of pupils' involvement in their own learning.

Information about the school

The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although an increasing number of pupils (16%) are from minority ethnic backgrounds. All pupils speak English at home. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The main needs are moderate learning difficulties and physical difficulties.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school provides part-time education for three-year-olds in its Nursery. The vast majority of Nursery children transfer into the three Reception classes. Children start in the Nursery with skills that are generally slightly above those expected for their age, particularly in speaking and in their personal and social skills.

The school has achieved the following awards: National Healthy Schools Status, Arts Mark Gold, Investors in People and an Active Sports Award.

A before- and after-school club called Beechwood Child Care uses the school premises. It is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school in all respects. It has improved significantly since its last inspection when it was also deemed to be excellent in all aspects. The school has securely maintained high standards and built on previously outstanding performance. Despite having no issues for improvement from the last inspection, the school has continued its pursuit of excellence. Significant strides forward include the restructuring of staff to provide highly effective leadership at all levels and improvements to ensure even better outcomes for pupils' personal development. High staff morale and exceedingly ambitious, challenging and determined leadership indicate an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

A fundamental reason for the school's exceptional success is that the headteacher's inspirational leadership encourages staff to have the highest possible aspirations for themselves and the pupils. She has skilfully developed a staff team who are committed to school improvement and who strive constantly for excellence. The headteacher's highly ambitious vision for the school is manifest in the exciting, stimulating and vibrant learning environment. Bright, spacious corridors and classrooms filled with high quality displays convey the outstanding achievements of all groups of pupils. Parents speak in glowing terms about the school's considerable achievements. One parent, summing up the views of many, wrote, 'The headteacher shows incredible commitment to her job and sets a great example for all staff and pupils.' Others say they feel very fortunate that their children 'attend this phenomenal school with its very high academic standards and absolute dedication to ensuring pupils' well-being'.

Other areas of outstanding practice include:

- the high standards pupils attain and their excellent achievement in reading, writing, mathematics, history and art
- the fact that all groups of pupils love learning and thrive on tackling challenging activities
- outstanding provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that they have an excellent and very happy start to school life
- pupils' polite and considerate behaviour coupled with excellent relationships ensure a happy, positive ethos which is strongly underpinned by Christian values

- inspirational teaching, together with outstanding subject knowledge and highly effective use of assessment information, results in all groups of pupils making outstanding progress
- innovative curriculum design provides pupils of differing abilities with exceptionally memorable learning experiences
- highly rigorous self-evaluation and challenge, together with extensive monitoring, result in highly effective actions to continually raise all pupils' attainment and achievement even higher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a leading role in working in partnerships with other schools to promote innovative practice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Trends in assessment results over the last five years show that pupils' attainment has been consistently high in reading, writing, mathematics and science. In 2009, well over half of the Year 2 pupils attained the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics and three quarters of the pupils attained this level in science. Pupils also achieve exceptionally well in art and history.

In virtually all lessons observed during the inspection, pupils made outstanding progress and attained high standards. Pupils show excellent concentration and perseverance. They confidently and maturely describe how the 'Building Learning Power' strategies they use, such as resourcefulness, help them to become better learners. All pupils demonstrate a real quest for knowledge and a love of challenging tasks. A good example of this was observed in a Year 2 mathematics lesson where more able pupils showed considerable resilience in solving the complex problems.

Inspectors noted that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported sensitively and very effectively so that they have total access to all activities and make excellent progress. A parent stated, 'Words cannot describe my high regard both for the school and all the staff in the way they support my child's disability.'

Here are some other key features of pupil outcomes.

- Pupils say they feel very safe at school and parental questionnaire responses agree. Pupils say there is no bullying and feel their views are listened to and that they can go to any adult if they have any worries.
- Behaviour in school, on educational visits and in church services is outstanding.
- One hundred per cent of the pupils eat the nutritious healthy school lunches and all pupils have individual health profiles that pupils have set to improve aspects of their health. Virtually all pupils engage in the wide range of sporting activities on offer, although they would also like a cricket wicket!
- Pupils love taking responsibilities and are highly enthusiastic play leaders, visitor monitors, councillors and litter pickers.
- They are very involved in local issues such as Solihull Action on Homelessness, attend half-termly Eucharists at their adjacent church and make wide use of

- local amenities. They also participate in the National ‘Sing up’ campaign at the Symphony Hall. Pupils describe strong links with a primary school in Uganda.
- Attendance and punctuality are high and parents report that pupils are keen to attend regularly and want to attend even when they are unwell.
 - Pupils’ excellent progress in their basic skills, together with their outstanding personal skills and knowledge of how to develop learning skills, means they are exceptionally well equipped for lifelong learning.
 - Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. At the heart of the school’s work is its ‘values education’ whereby pupils and parents and staff focus on a different universal value each month.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and the team of talented teaching assistants work very closely together. Their excellent subject knowledge and high expectations ensure that lessons are exciting, stimulating and challenging. Hence pupils become engrossed and highly active learners. Planning is outstanding because it is very detailed and shows exactly how pupils’ different learning needs are to be met. Lessons often begin with exciting stimuli, such as a visit from the man who trained the owls for the Harry Potter films. He enthralled the pupils with many live animals. Year 1 pupils vividly recall their recent lessons based around an outstanding topic about Australia. This started with the hall being converted into an airport where pupils experienced the pre-boarding safety procedures, complete with a metal detector arch. Teachers make excellent use of assessment information to plan lessons to precisely match pupils’ various abilities. Individuals as well as groups of pupils who require further support or increased challenge in their learning are swiftly identified and highly effective measures are put into place. Pupils’ progress is meticulously tracked and evaluated to identify the progress made by different groups. All pupils know what their targets are and they

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

know exactly how to improve their work, thanks to teachers' high calibre marking. Pupils are exceptionally involved in their own learning and demonstrate maturity beyond their years when they confidently discuss ways to become even better learners.

The school is at the forefront of innovative curriculum design. This is manifest in the outstanding way pupils explore curriculum areas and staff make meaningful cross-curricular contexts for learning. For example, Year 2 pupils were instantly captivated and fascinated by the sight of their teacher dressed as a Victorian laundry maid. Superb, authentic resources enabled children to see at first hand the trials and tribulations of domestic life without modern gadgets. This role-play inspired both boys and girls to write high quality empathetic recounts. More able pupils have effective personalised learning programmes for specific curriculum areas. Parents value and appreciate this; one wrote, 'My child is quite gifted at maths and his needs are met exceedingly well in a way that has been sensitive to his needs and the needs of others.' Close partnerships with other local schools result in many shared events such as the school's recent hosting of a highly successful science workshop involving a bug hunt. Highly effective support for all pupils enables them to make the best of all the opportunities provided by the school. Staff know pupils and their families very well. One parent spoke for many when she commented, 'The school has exceptionally strong leadership which is reflected in the calibre of its staff and a culture of care and support for children which is as important as any academic development.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, senior and subject leaders and the governing body form an exceptionally impressive team where their distinct areas of expertise combine seamlessly to make this school highly successful. There is a tremendous team spirit in school and all staff are totally committed to providing the very best for all pupils. Leaders carry out detailed and reflective evaluations to successfully improve all subjects and aspects. Newly appointed staff slot easily into their new roles because there are exceptionally clear policies and procedures underpinning all aspects of the school's work. The school's effective work to promote equalities is demonstrated in the skilful way staff are closing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in writing. Inspectors' classroom observations reveal that adapted planning and exciting and memorable curriculum events to encourage boys' writing are paying dividends. The school has excellent policies, strategies and procedures to ensure the welfare of all pupils. Safeguarding policies are constantly reviewed and updated to ensure pupils' safety. Staff and governors have an excellent awareness of safeguarding measures. Community cohesion is promoted very well, with an effective audit

undertaken and excellent plans in hand to broaden pupils' understanding of life for children in different parts of England. The parents' council provides an excellent forum for parents to raise issues, present ideas and say what they like or have changed at school. Recent involvement includes helping to review the travel plan, an evaluation of the equalities legislation, input into a whole-school food policy and a revision of the homework policy. The excellent school website provides parents with a myriad of information, including advice on managing challenging behaviour and how to pronounce phonemes correctly.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is stunning. There are exciting and inviting displays and activities hanging from every available wall space and ceiling in the Nursery and Reception classes, just waiting to be enjoyed. No wonder children make rapid progress in all areas of their development. The fantastic outdoor learning area which provides both challenge and intrigue is freely available at all times and in all seasons for Nursery children. Children love being outside and confidently learn to take risks and explore in a safe, supervised environment. It is not so easy for the Reception children to have daily access to the outdoor areas but staff do all they can to ensure these children experience outdoor learning whenever possible. Outstanding leadership and management, excellent teaching and loving care ensure that most children exceed the expected levels for their age on entry to Year 1. Staff make learning fun and enjoyable and really challenge children to think and work together. For instance, Reception children have just successfully rescued a fictitious failing zoo. They formed working groups to devise ways to improve animals' cages and environments. After visiting Twycross Zoo, they set about designing and making their own animal habitats. They also wrote fantastic advertising jingles to attract more visitors and successfully saved the zoo from closure.

Nursery and Reception staff work as a highly effective team and have excellent knowledge and understanding of the personal and learning needs of young children.

This ensures that children make exceptional progress in their personal, social and emotional development and are well equipped for their move to Year 1. The curriculum is excellent and provides constant pleasure, excitement and adventure. Parents feel their children have a wonderful start and appreciate the endless patience and unbounded enthusiasm of all the staff. Nursery parents said that, 'The recent change of Nursery staff was well handled and we are extremely pleased with the new staff team.' They are also very impressed with the high standard of care and how skilfully the staff interact with all the children.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Almost all the completed parental questionnaires were positive. Parents commented on the exceptionally strong leadership, the excellent staff team which includes the administrative and catering staff and the site manager, the high quality support which provides so very well for all groups of pupils, the uniquely special atmosphere, the exceptionally high standards and an ethos that values each child. A very small number of parents raised concerns and there were no issues which were relevant to the school as a whole.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Alphege Church of England Infant and Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 82 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 240 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	19	2	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
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.



21 May 2009

Dear Children

**Inspection of St Alphege Church of England Infant and Nursery School,
Solihull, B91 3DW**

It was a real treat for us to visit your school and I am writing to thank you for two extremely interesting days. It was great to see your smiling faces and we really enjoyed watching you working so hard in lessons and playing happily outside. Highlights for us included talking to you about all the exciting and challenging work you do at school, attending your Eucharist service in church and looking at the amazing displays of your work. Thank you to the Year 2 tour guides who do such a superb job of showing visitors around the school. We are really pleased that the Reception children managed to rescue Bedford Zoo. We agree completely with you and your parents that you go to an outstanding school in all respects.

These are the things we liked best.

- Your behaviour is excellent and you are keen and eager to learn new things.
- You are all doing very well in lessons.
- You enjoy the delicious school meals and eating healthily and you are brilliant at helping the headteacher to run the school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make learning exceptionally interesting and fun for you.
- Anyone who needs help in any way is always given it.
- The teachers and staff take excellent care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher is brilliant at leading and managing the school.

The headteacher, staff and governors have lots of good ideas to make the school even better. We agree with their ideas. We think that it would be good if the headteacher and staff could share all the excellent activities you do with other schools. We are sure you will have some good ideas about this.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Joyce Cox
Lead inspector

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