

St Alphege Church of England Junior School

Widney Manor Road, Solihull, B91 3JG

Inspection dates 14–15 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils reach above-average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in mathematics. Standards in writing are improving because the school has focused effectively on previous weaknesses.
- The quality of teaching is generally good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers use consistent teaching strategies throughout the school so that pupils learn well.
- Pupils are well behaved in classrooms, around the school and in the playground. They have positive attitudes to learning and relish responsibility. Rates of attendance are outstanding.
- The executive headteacher, senior leaders and governors have a very clear idea of what the school needs, ensuring teaching is good and pupils achieve well.
- The school is very aware of its strengths and tackles its weaknesses relentlessly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils make less rapid progress in English than in mathematics and standards in reading are not as good as in writing. This is because a significant proportion of pupils read fluently but do not always understand fully what the words tell them.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Marking does not regularly enough give pupils advice on how to improve their work.
- Teachers sometimes do not involve pupils in discussions and work is not always matched precisely enough to pupils' abilities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 17 lessons taught by 12 teachers.
- They held discussions with pupils, teachers, the executive headteacher, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection took account of a range of documents, including policies about keeping pupils safe. Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' books.
- The views of 27 parents were analysed through the Parent View website.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 29 questionnaires returned by school staff.

Inspection team

Alwyne Jolly, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gillian Weston	Additional Inspector
Shannon Moore	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Proportionally, far fewer pupils than average are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children from families who are known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those from families with parents in the armed forces.
- There are more pupils from minority ethnic groups than in most schools of this size, although few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school formed a federation with St Alphege Infant School in September 2010 under the leadership of the executive headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching so that more pupils make rapid progress by:
 - always matching pupils' work to their ability and setting more-able pupils more difficult tasks
 - providing more opportunities in lessons for pupils to extend their learning by discussing each other's views
 - consistently giving advice when marking their work on how pupils can improve.
- Improve standards in reading, particularly for able pupils, by teaching them to read between the lines and find deeper meaning in what authors write.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' achievement is good throughout the school for all ethnic groups. A very high proportion attained the expected standard in English and mathematics in the national tests for Year 6 and the majority exceeded them. Current work in books and classrooms also shows above-average attainment in all year groups.
- Pupils take a little time to settle into Year 3 when they join the school and adjust to the new systems and expectations in classrooms. Recent improvements in teaching mean that they make consistently good progress throughout the school and the standard of work completed in classrooms is above average. The school's data demonstrate that pupils in Year 4 have made particularly good progress in the last year in both reading and writing. Pupils in Year 6 have made rapid progress in writing and a significant number of pupils in all years are making more than expected progress in mathematics.
- The school builds well on the pupils' strengths in reading and writing. The quality of writing is improving throughout the school as a result of concerted action to remedy previously identified weaknesses. Pupils' books, both in English and other subjects, are full of writing which reflects their wide vocabulary and interesting ideas.
- Similarly, pupils regularly practise their mathematical skills in other subjects so they make good progress. Pupils read widely and can talk confidently about the authors they like and the stories they have enjoyed. However, their skills in reading between the lines and making deductions are less strong, which was reflected in the recent national tests.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because work is set at the right level for them. Their attainment compares well with pupils in other schools who need extra help.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium also achieve well as a result of targeted individual and small-group support, particularly in reading and writing. Their good progress shows clearly that the school is significantly narrowing the gap in to the standards they achieve compared to the national average.
- The vast majority of pupils are both articulate and polite listeners. This was reflected when a pupil in Year 4 responded confidently to challenging questions from other pupils about the school's nature area, resulting in a lively, orderly discussion.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is usually good and some is outstanding. This has had a direct impact on the consistently good progress now seen and the above-average attainment of the pupils.
- A very positive atmosphere in the school encourages pupils to learn well. Teachers have high expectations and work is generally pitched at a demanding level. Occasionally, particularly in lessons for groups set by ability, the same work is planned for all. As a result, because the work is not planned precisely enough for the different abilities in the groups, they do not all make the rapid progress they could.

- Effective links are made across all subjects, and these give pupils a wide range of opportunities to use their literacy and mathematical skills. This was evident in both their reading of the 'The boy in the striped pyjamas' and an imaginary trip to the Severn Valley as evacuees, which also helped to promote their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
- There are outstanding examples of teachers regularly checking pupils' work in lessons. For example, where pupils had not fully understood something, the teacher adapted the lesson to provide extra help. All teachers mark pupils' books regularly and thoroughly, although advice on how pupils can improve their work is not given often enough in some classes.
- Teachers and other adults explain what they want the pupils to do very clearly. This is particularly helpful to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They are given appropriate help but also are encouraged so they can work effectively by themselves.
- Teachers' questioning is generally effective and often probing to deepen pupils' understanding. Pupils respond perceptively but teachers sometimes miss opportunities to extend their involvement in what is being discussed. In these lessons the teacher too often responds to what has been said rather than seeking the opinions of other pupils and extending their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school and this is seen in above-average attendance. Over the last year rates of attendance have been high and pupils are extremely punctual. Pupils talk very positively about how safe they feel, which is reflected unanimously in the Parent View responses.
- Behaviour in the playground is good. All different groups socialise well and new pupils reported how sensitive many others were in helping them and talking with them if they were on their own.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally very good. In all classrooms pupils have good relationships with each other, the teachers and other adults. Only on rare occasions are a few pupils restless, such as in guided reading sessions, restricting the progress they make.
- Pupils enjoy responsibilities, which they fulfil well around the school, in the playground and in assemblies. They take a prominent, active role in the life of the school as eco-warriors and members of the school council. However, in contrast, pupils are unresponsive in some lessons where the teaching does not give them enough opportunity to be involved in class discussions.
- Pupils understand that bullying can take different forms but are emphatic that it is rare in the school. They report that name-calling is also uncommon. On the few occasions when pupils fall out, they said the teachers quickly resolved any disagreement.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher, senior staff and governing body display a determined drive for improvement. There is a strong, shared commitment from all staff to improve further the quality of learning. The school's successful response to previous shortcomings and maintenance of above average standards confirms the capacity to sustain further improvement.
- The local authority provides the school with 'light-touch' support because it has achieved above-average results in national tests. It has given effective guidance and challenge in respect of data

related to pupils' progress and any perceived underperformance. The school has an accurate understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses. It has good systems to check the progress that pupils are making and determine what further actions are necessary.

- Previous weaknesses in the quality of writing, particularly for more-able pupils, have been tackled successfully. A range of different approaches were introduced and attainment is now above average for pupils of all abilities when compared nationally. Careful analysis of recent test results by the literacy co-ordinator has precisely identified the weaker area of pupils' reading, and new improvement strategies have been implemented.
- The quality of teaching is monitored predominantly by the headteacher with support from other senior leaders. Although regular, systematic and based on clear criteria, it lacks enough rigour at times to identify fully the areas where teaching needs to improve further. Nevertheless, the system of setting targets for teachers is well established and closely linked to reviews of teachers' salaries. Any decisions on increases in teachers' pay are linked to good or better teaching.
- The school provides a wide, well-balanced range of subjects and activities for pupils. The variety of extra activities outside of lessons is extensive. There is a strong emphasis on learning through art and other cultures and on spiritual matters. The school's focus on personal and social development leads to positive relationships through the school. What the school provides for the pupils' moral, social, spiritual and cultural development effectively underpins the life of the school.
- There is a strong commitment to providing equal opportunities for all. This is reflected in the effective leadership and management of the education of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Zero tolerance of any form of discrimination creates a harmonious, positive community. There are good relationships with parents, who appreciate their opportunity to be involved in the regular meetings of the parents' council and the relevant, up-to-date information they receive directly or on the school's website.
- Being part of a federation has brought benefits. There is now a much stronger focus on continuity of approaches between the infant and junior schools and this helps when pupils move into Year 3. As a result, they are now making faster progress when they first join the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed and governors have a wide range of professional skills and interests. They review the executive headteacher's lesson observations, know about the quality of teaching and play a full part in deciding whether teachers should be rewarded or action should be taken to tackle underperformance. They have a strong interest in the school's training programme and recognise its importance, particularly for recently appointed inexperienced teachers. Governors also regularly attend courses and training to keep up-to-date, particularly on safeguarding and the interpretation of data on the school's academic performance. Safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and fully met requirements at the time of the inspection. The governing body has discussed the use of the pupil premium funding and approved its allocation to provide additional learning support for identified pupils. Governors are fully aware that it has led successfully to a narrowing of the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104092
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	402810

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Moore
Headteacher	Jo Slough
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2007
Telephone number	0121 704 2714
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Email address	office@st-alphege-jun.solihull.sch.uk

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