

Church of the Ascension C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103835
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	286779
Inspection dates	26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Chris Kessell

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	286
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sheila Benbow
Headteacher	Mr Richard Green
Date of previous school inspection	3–6 December 2001
School address	New Street Wall Heath Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 9AH
Telephone number	01384 818760
Fax number	01384 818761

Age group	5–11
Inspection date(s)	26 June 2007
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is above average in size and most pupils come from White British backgrounds. Only a few pupils are eligible for free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features, particularly with regards to pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils are very happy at school and develop into mature, caring and sensible individuals who are very well prepared for the next stage of their education and later lives. Their understanding of the importance of a balanced diet and regular exercise is excellent. Pupils appreciate the improvements in the 'healthiness' of school dinners and 'grab-bags' and the opportunities the school provides for them to take part in sporting activities.

Achievement is good. Pupils get a good start in the Foundation Stage (Reception classes) which then continues in Years 1 to 6. By the time the pupils leave school, standards are well above average. The good progress that pupils make is the result of good teaching and learning. Lessons are well organised so that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations of standards of work and behaviour. Consequently, they are keen to answer questions and talk about their work. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and work together well in groups or independently. The older pupils, for example, appreciate being treated as 'young adults'. Staff keep a careful track of pupils' progress. Teachers' marking assesses what pupils have achieved in individual lessons but does not always provide sufficient guidance on how to improve further.

The school's good curriculum contributes well to pupils' considerable enjoyment of school and many aspects of their personal development. Year 6 pupils spoke very positively about the 'Health Week' where, in their words, 'We learnt about things we need to know as we grow up'. Care, guidance and support are good. The school is a caring, Christian community where pupils feel safe and secure. Although pupils acknowledge that there is some bullying, they describe it as 'falling outs' which are resolved quickly. They also identify that there is always someone they can turn to if they have any problems or concerns. There are very strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils devise their own personal learning targets but these are not always directly related to their capabilities. The school acknowledges that this is an area for development, along with providing the pupils with more opportunities to self-assess their work.

The school is successful because leadership and management are good. Academic performance is monitored rigorously and the school has continued to improve since it was last inspected. The headteacher and hard-working staff team have a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. Recent improvements in pupils' writing standards indicate that the school has a good capacity to improve further. Most parents are very supportive of the school. Typical comments include, 'Pupils are given a good, balanced education', 'Staff are professional and approachable' and 'We're sad they are leaving'. Although the school conducts an annual questionnaire with its parents, a very small minority feel that their suggestions and concerns are not taken into account.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide the pupils with learning targets that are relevant to their capabilities and ensure they are given clear guidance on how to achieve their targets and opportunities to self-assess their progress.
- Ensure that all parents feel that their suggestions and concerns are taken into account.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is good. Children enter school with abilities which are slightly above those expected for their age. Children make good progress in the Reception classes as a result of effective teaching and well-organised provision. Most exceed the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, continue to make good progress as they move through Years 1 to 6 and attain well- above-average standards in English, mathematics and science. The school sets challenging and realistic targets and ensures that all pupils reach their potential. The proportion of pupils that reach or exceed the higher Level 5 in Year 6 is much higher than found nationally. Analysis of the 2006 national assessments indicated to the school that pupils did not do as well in writing as they did in reading. The school has worked hard to improve this and predictions for 2007 look promising.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' outstanding personal development is shown in their friendly, relaxed and confident manner. It is not often that an Ofsted inspector is thanked for inspecting the school. The school's Christian ethos contributes significantly to the pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pupils raise funds for a number of charities selected by the school council, including a school in Peru. They also contribute well to the local community, taking part in wide-ranging events such as carrying out traffic and road surveys and providing harvest boxes for local people. Their enthusiasm and immense enjoyment of school is reflected in the high levels of attendance. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They acknowledge that very occasionally, one or two of them 'have their moments,' but these are very rare. Pupils' awareness of safe practice is good and is demonstrated by the sensible way they move around the school and, for example, when monitors put out equipment for assembly. The pupils' maturity and self-confidence is outstanding. This serves them very well for the future along with their well-above-average standards in English and mathematics.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good quality teaching ensures that pupils make good progress throughout the school. Pupils respond enthusiastically by working hard and becoming confident learners. They show good levels of concentration in lessons. Classrooms are interesting places and there is always a 'buzz' of enthusiasm. Pupils are proud of

their work, keen to answer questions and eager to please. Teachers set clear learning intentions so that pupils are aware of what they are learning and why it is important. Once activities begin, pupils are fully engaged in their work. Work is marked regularly against lesson objectives. However, marking is not always as helpful as it could be in informing pupils of what they need to do to improve. Pupils' own assessment of their work is not fully established in the school and recognised as an area for development. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils and make a significant contribution to their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum ensures that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Parents are impressed by the way that their children settle into school quickly. A good focus is placed on the children's personal and social development in the Reception classes. As a result, children's enthusiasm for learning begins here. Currently, the school is developing the links between the Reception and Year 1 curriculum. Pupils find activities enjoyable and their work in subjects like geography, history and art is good. However, the natural links that exist between subjects are not always exploited by the school's curriculum. Pupils' experiences are increased significantly by enrichment activities and extra-curricular clubs. All pupils, for example, have the opportunity to begin to speak a modern foreign language and the Year 6 pupils spoke fondly of their recent residential visit to Paris.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Many aspects of the school's care, guidance and support contribute to the pupils' very good personal qualities. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are securely in place and reviewed regularly. Parents have good opportunities to be involved in their child's education, with regular reviews of their progress. The school has effective links with outside organisations that benefit the pupils. 'National Healthy Schools Status' and the 'Sports Council Active Mark' are good examples of this. Pupils are given good academic guidance on a day-to-day basis in the classroom. Teachers' interactions with their pupils are good. However, pupils' targets for learning are not specific enough and not all pupils can remember what their targets are.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management of the school have led to pupils achieving well whilst enjoying a rich and exciting education. Evaluation of the school's work is effective and performance is monitored thoroughly. The school is in a good position to identify pupils who either need extra support or more challenging work because of the detailed use of information about the progress of pupils. The headteacher tends to check on the quality of teaching and learning more informally than normally expected. However, he has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Although most parents are supportive of the school, a few worry about the levels of communication between home and school and, particularly, whether parents' and carers' views and concerns are listened to.

Governors are proud of the school. They provide strong support, are actively involved in strategic development and are aware of their responsibilities to hold the school to account.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	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.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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

27 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Church of Ascension C of E Primary School, Wall Heath, West Midlands DY6 9AH

I really enjoyed my visit to your school. You were all so helpful and friendly. It is not often that I am thanked for inspecting a school but you were polite enough to do that. I particularly enjoyed talking to you about your school, visiting your classrooms and joining you for assembly. The work you are doing to become an 'Eco School' sounds very exciting and I particularly liked the fact that you were keen to 'guard and look after the environment'.

Your school provides you with a good education, with some outstanding features. You make good progress with your work and reach well-above-average standards by the end of Year 6. This is because the teaching in the school is good. You enjoy school very much. Attendance levels are very high. The school's good curriculum provides you with many varied activities which you find fun and interesting. It was good to hear the Year 6 pupils reminiscing about their trip to Paris. All of these things help you with your excellent personal development.

I have asked the school to make sure that you all have targets that will help you learn even more and that you can remember. I have also asked the teachers to give you better advice when they mark your work to help you reach your targets. In addition, that you are given more time to assess your work by yourselves.

The headteacher, staff and governors work hard as a team to make sure you get a good education. All of the good things about the school are a result of their good leadership and management. The school is popular with your parents, although a few of them believe that their views and concerns are not always listened to. I have also asked the school to look at this issue.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell
Lead Inspector