

Fordham All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115078
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311816
Inspection date	18 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth Frith

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	
School	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Garrad
Headteacher	Mr Gordon Malcolm
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2002
School address	Mill Road Fordham Colchester Essex CO6 3NN
Telephone number	01206 240251
Fax number	01206 240501

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the recent work on improving writing, the challenge presented to pupils in mathematics, particularly for more capable pupils in Key Stage 2 and the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation. She gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation form, lesson observations, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, pupils' work, information that the school keeps on how well pupils are doing, the school improvement plan and an analysis of the parents' questionnaire responses. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small, four-class school with nearly a half of its pupils coming from beyond the immediate catchment area. More pupils apply for places than can be admitted. Families live in a variety of urban and rural settings and represent a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage receiving free school meals is below average. Children enter the school with attainment that is typical of children nationally, although this varies from year-to-year. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is currently below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.

The school has received the Eco School Bronze Award in recognition of its work.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils flourish. The school's success reflects excellent leadership and management that are focussed clearly on promoting pupils' personal development and well-being, and raising standards. This results in exceptional care and personal development of pupils, an exciting curriculum and outstanding achievement. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school based on his high expectations and commitment to the pupils, their families and the local community. As one pupil commented, 'A normal headteacher just makes rules, but ours makes it a really fun place to be in.' A clear lead is given to colleagues who, in turn, work as a very effective team sharing his sense of purpose and developing a strong family ethos within the school. All staff are fully committed to Fordham All Saints and staff morale is high. Staff take on a variety of management responsibilities successfully as duties are well allocated and staff strengths recognised. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and this gives them the confidence to ask questions both about its standards and how they could be improved. There are particularly good systems for checking how well the school is doing and identifying what it could do better. These reflect the school's consistent drive for improvement. In addition, they have been instrumental in the exceptionally good improvement since the last inspection and the school's excellent capacity to improve further.

Parents, almost without exception, are extremely positive about the school. Typical comments from parents such as, 'An excellent, caring and very happy school' and 'We feel very privileged that both our children have been able to attend such a lovely village school where they have achieved so much', reflect this well. Pupils, too, are proud of their school. This is expressed in their enthusiasm to talk about their work, when they asked to sing to the inspector and in a letter that stated, 'Tell the world about us so other children can come and enjoy all the fun we have'.

Gains in learning are never less than good and are frequently outstanding, because teaching is excellent, and pupils respond well to the challenges set. By the end of Year 6, standards are typically above average and are sometimes exceptionally high. New initiatives, better target setting and a focus on raising standards are beginning to bring a greater consistency to achievement and standards but results in national assessments vary from year-to-year. There is no complacency amongst staff, however, as they are constantly striving to improve their practice in order to raise standards further. The excellent systems to check how well children are doing and an analysis of their work have highlighted areas for improvement. This has ensured that work is sufficiently challenging in mathematics and pupils' writing is improving. Evidence provided by the school, work in lessons and in pupils' books show that all groups of pupils are progressing very well and are on course to meet the targets set.

On entry to lessons, there is frequently a buzz of excitement as pupils are thoroughly involved in their learning. A key feature of the teaching is the way staff capture pupils' interest by using a wide range of teaching styles and ensure that learning is very active. For example, older pupils work out mathematical questions and give the answers through physical movements and younger children 'fly' on their magic carpets and 'see' the settings from a recently read story. The planning of lessons is of a high standard. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they want pupils to learn, and share this with them. Consequently, pupils know what they need to do next to improve their work at a day-to-day level. Because tasks are challenging for the range of abilities and ages within each class, pupils are confident enough to tackle the work and feel able to succeed. This feeling of success helps to develop their interest in learning.

A key feature of the school's excellent curriculum is the way in which it engenders excitement and enjoyment in pupils' learning. A few older pupils work beyond the lesson, for example at lunchtime, because they are so excited about a new discovery in mathematics and want to share it with others. Exceptionally good links between subjects and the development of a curriculum to extend pupils' skills make learning easier and relevant to pupils. A wide range of popular enrichment activities such as clubs, visitors and visits widen pupils' learning and help them to develop new skills. The particularly good focus on developing pupils' personal, social and health education results in pupils' exceptional behaviour and an excellent understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives through, for example, plenty of energetic but safe exercise during playtimes. The pupils' place within the school community and beyond is also particularly well developed. Pupils care about others and realise the impact of their actions. This helps to create a harmonious community and caring school ethos. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to school improvements by putting their ideas to the school council and by caring for the environment. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. They develop a keen spiritual awareness through many areas of study and through thinking about themselves and their place within the world. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and prepared particularly well for the next stage of education. Attendance is high and pupils arrive in the morning keen to start the day.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children's learning and development in Reception are impressive in relation to their starting points. Gains in learning are often excellent. Children settle quickly and easily because expectations are clear and routines helpful. Through regular observations and assessments, staff recognise the uniqueness of each child and quickly identify and support their learning needs. High quality planning and exciting activities ensure that children thoroughly enjoy their learning, and are suitably challenged. A particularly good balance is achieved between the time children work under the close direction of a member of staff and the time they develop their independent skills by working unaided. Their excitement when drawing the 'Yellow Brick Road' and making the 'Emerald City' was a joy to see and confirmed how much they had learnt from previous sessions. Because of excellent provision, such as this, most children reach at least the levels expected for their age when they enter Year 1 and many achieve above the expected standard. The adults in charge have exceptionally high aspirations, and expectations of what children can do are high.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate the implementation of new initiatives, including improved target setting, to ensure greater consistency in standards from year-to-year.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 the 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

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

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	1
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

20 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fordham All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School,
Colchester CO6 3NN

You probably remember that I recently visited your school to see what you do and what you learn. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and a special thanks Class 3 for your letter. I really enjoyed talking to you all and watching you learn and play. I agree with you and think you go to an excellent school. Here are some of the things I found out.

- You try hard and work very well so that by Year 6 you are doing work which is very good indeed.
- You thoroughly enjoy school and behave exceptionally well because you are very interested in what you are doing.
- Your attendance is excellent. This is very important. Well done!
- You get on very well with each other and make good friends.
- You know such a lot about how to stay healthy and safe. You spend your play and lunchtimes very well by getting lots of exercise and keeping fit.
- You support the school and local community very well.
- You feel safe in school. I was pleased to hear that you would talk to a member of staff if you had problems.
- All the adults enjoy teaching you and try to make learning fun. Teaching is excellent.

Mr Malcolm leads and manages the school very well and gets lots of help from staff and governors. They have agreed that they will continue to improve teaching, learning and the way they set your targets to ensure that you always do as well as you can. I know you will respond well to their efforts and try as hard as you can.

I have taken away many good memories of your school and your enthusiasm for learning. I wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith

Lead inspector