

# Acton CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 111265            |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Cheshire East     |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 378264            |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 1–2 February 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Steven Hill       |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                                      |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary controlled                         |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 137  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                           |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Gareth Edwards                               |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Beverley Dolman                              |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 14 May 2009                                  |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Chester Road<br>Acton<br>Nantwich<br>CW5 8LG |
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Steven Hill

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Ten lessons were observed, taught by seven teachers. In addition, the inspector made several short observations of lessons where younger pupils were learning about phonics (how the sounds in words relate to how they are written.) Samples of pupils' work were examined, and the inspector listened to six younger pupils read. Meetings were held with staff, groups of pupils, and three members of the governing body (who are also parents and carers). The inspector took account of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and analysed questionnaires received during the inspection from 81 parents and carers as well as from staff and pupils. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a variety of documentation, including teachers' planning, information about safeguarding, and details of the tracking of pupils' progress.

## Information about the school

This is a small primary school in a rural location. The vast majority of pupils are White British, with a few from a range of other ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is also below average. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The school meets the current floor standard.

Since the last inspection, the number of pupils on roll has grown. There are now separate classes for each age group, except in Years 4 and 5. There has been significant staffing change in the last six months for a variety of reasons beyond the school's control. The school runs a breakfast and after-school club on a daily basis for its own pupils.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall Effectiveness</b>          | <b>1</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>1</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>1</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>1</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>1</b> |

## Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. A sharp rise in achievement since the last inspection has happened because the quality of teaching has risen to outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they have extremely positive relationships with each other and with staff. They feel very safe and secure in school, greatly enjoy learning and are keen to succeed. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- All boys and girls make outstanding progress and achieve outstandingly well. Boys tend to reach higher standards than girls in mathematics, although girls' attainment in the subject is nonetheless well-above average. Similarly, girls often outdo boys in English, although this gap has closed recently because changes to the curriculum are engaging boys' interest much more effectively.
- Teachers are very skilled at using the good curriculum to engage and enthuse pupils in their learning. They make excellent use of the school's much-improved assessment systems to ensure that work is matched to pupils' specific needs.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Reception class. They make great strides in their learning due to the outstanding provision.
- Excellent leadership and management underpin the vast improvements made. Initially driven by the clear vision of the headteacher, this drive is now shared by a strong senior leadership team and a knowledgeable governing body.
- The rigorous monitoring of teaching and an insistence on high expectations, backed by clear challenge and support to colleagues, have successfully raised the quality of teaching and learning to outstanding.
- The extremely thorough and detailed tracking of pupils' progress, as individuals and as groups, ensures that no-one is allowed to fall behind. This is particularly

effective in ensuring that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make excellent progress.

- Attendance has risen from average to high over the last few years.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise standards even higher and close the remaining gaps between boys' and girls' achievement by:
  - modifying the mathematics curriculum to generate more enthusiasm for the subject from girls, and enlisting the help of their parents and carers in this
  - fully embedding initiatives to ensure topics for writing are more appealing to boys and stimulate their interest, and so raise boys' achievement in English.

## **Main Report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

Attainment is well above average and achievement is outstanding. Children start in the Reception class with standards that, while variable, are broadly in line with those expected. They make excellent progress, particularly in their early reading, writing and calculating skills. This firm base is consolidated by outstanding progress at Key Stage 1, so that standards at the end of Year 2 have been significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics for the last two years. Rapid progress continues at Key Stage 2 and some weaker progress made by older pupils previously has been eradicated. Standards are high by the time pupils leave. All pupils, regardless of background, do similarly well. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make the same excellent progress as their classmates. The relatively few pupils from minority ethnic groups are among the school's highest achievers. Standards are high overall, partly because disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress. They often reach the standards expected nationally. The extremely high achievement of girls in English is starting to be matched by that of boys, whose enthusiasm for the subject is growing because recent topics studied have stimulated their interest more. The school plans to help girls raise their already high standards in mathematics to match those of the boys by similarly setting work that builds on their interests and so stimulates their enthusiasm.

Pupils make fast progress in lessons because they concentrate well and work hard. In an excellent Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils watched and listened attentively as their teacher explained how to multiply decimals, and then worked hard to tackle examples that were carefully matched to their different abilities. They all succeeded because they persevered even when they found aspects of the task difficult. Pupils' excellent collaborative skills make a strong contribution to their progress. This starts from Reception, exemplified when children worked together in their 'blackcurrant

factory' in the water tray, sharing equipment and happily exchanging their ideas for 'sweetening' the juice and for removing the 'bits'. Younger pupils make rapid progress in learning phonics, as they join in interesting, fast-paced activities in ability groups. They develop a secure understanding of increasingly complex structures, which they use confidently to decode unfamiliar words in their books. Older pupils build effectively upon this and gain a clear understanding of complex spelling rules. Parents and carers are generally very positive about their children's progress. However, about 10% expressed reservations in the questionnaires because of the recent staffing changes and staff absence. The inspection evidence, backed up by the school's thorough monitoring of progress in the classes affected, shows that teaching and progress continue to be strong.

## Quality of teaching

Almost all teaching is at least good, with much that is outstanding. Teachers are particularly adept at matching tasks to pupils' different needs, so that pupils learn rapidly when tackling challenging but manageable work. A major strength, throughout the school, is how well teachers monitor pupils' ongoing progress. They intervene very effectively to enhance learning. They challenge pupils to refine their work and help any who are struggling, so pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Skilled teaching assistants play a major part in this, particularly in ensuring that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported very effectively to do as well as they can. Such ongoing monitoring is a particular strength in Reception, where adults sensitively join in play to increase children's understanding and extend their vocabulary. Pupils in all classes are very positive about the teaching they receive. They respond enthusiastically and conscientiously to high expectations, because they like and respect their teachers and are keen to please them by doing well. The large majority of parents and carers are complimentary about teaching, except for those who have some concerns about staffing changes.

Teachers generate great enthusiasm from pupils, making skilled use of many exciting aspects of the curriculum to harness their interest. Lessons consistently enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social or cultural development. The contribution to pupils' excellent cultural development is apparent in their tuneful singing, the high quality of art work on display, and their enthusiasm for poetry. Pupils now learn much more about people from around the world than at the time of the previous inspection. For example, work on Judaism and Buddhism extends their understanding of moral as well as cultural issues. Teachers present new ideas in a lively fashion, making excellent use of information and communication technology to clarify explanations and hold pupils' attention. Outstanding use is made of strategies to engage all pupils in activities. The frequent use of discussion, in pairs or in groups, involves the whole class and helps pupils to clarify their thinking and rehearse their answers. This makes an outstanding contribution to their social skills. This was observed as pupils in Years 4 and 5 worked in small groups extremely effectively to identify key features of an author's style. Teachers maintain a brisk pace and successfully encourage pupils to be independent. This was seen when Year 2 pupils wrote fluently and rapidly about motte and bailey castles. They made excellent progress and produced impressive results using 'professional' language.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils, parents and carers strongly agree that behaviour is a major strength of the school, and inspection evidence supports this. Pupils are extremely polite, friendly and have extremely good relationships with each other and with staff. Pupils say that a key strength of the school is the friends they make. All pupils, regardless of background, ability, gender or disability, get on extremely well and play and work happily together. They show caring attitudes to each other, seen in how kindly they treat any classmates who have difficulties. Older pupils enjoy giving help to younger ones, such as through the buddy scheme, where Year 6 pupils support Reception children when they start. In the playground, pupils come quickly and unprompted to the aid of any younger ones who are upset, or have suffered minor bumps or scrapes. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and their hard work and their exemplary conduct make a major contribution to their excellent achievement, as well as to the extremely harmonious ethos of the community. Pupils' great enjoyment of school is reflected in their high attendance. They take a great pride in their school, and are confident that they contribute to its improvement through the influential work of the school council. Pupils feel extremely safe. They and their parents and carers report that bullying is extremely rare. Work on tackling bullying has given them a secure understanding of what effect it might have and they are keen to combat this. They are very sure that any issues that do arise are dealt with quickly by staff, and are confident in approaching adults if they have problems at work or play. They have a very secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. The curriculum is highly effective in teaching pupils about the importance of safety.

## **Leadership and management**

The rapid and sustained improvement since the previous inspection has been brought about by the headteacher's relentless focus on improvement. In this she has been supported outstandingly well by the governing body and a very strong staff team who share the vision for getting the very best for the pupils. This has been very successful, largely because teaching has improved through an insistence on high quality and well-targeted professional development that has helped colleagues improve their practice. Excellent monitoring of pupils' progress is used purposefully by all teachers to target support or challenge, as needed, on individuals and groups thus boosting equal opportunities and ensuring all pupils make outstanding progress. The excellent record of improvement since the previous inspection demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity to improve further. The curriculum is good and is very well-adapted to pupils' different needs. The successful emphasis on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that discrimination is not tolerated by staff or pupils. The breakfast- and after-school club is well organised, and contributes very well to pupils' social development. Pupils feel safe and secure, and there are extremely positive relationships between pupils of different ages. The curriculum has many exciting elements, including very popular residential visits, clubs, practical activities and special events, such as the art competition that took place during the inspection. However it has not yet been fully effective in enthusing boys and girls equally in mathematics and English. This relative shortcoming is being tackled very effectively so that boys' achievement in writing is improving rapidly and securely, and girls' enthusiasm for and achievement in mathematics is also rising. It has not yet

had the same success in engaging parents and carers in mathematical activities as it has in English. The school puts a high priority on pupils' safety. Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements.



## Glossary

### 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.  |
| Grade 2 | Good         | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.  |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.  |
| 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. |

### Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 46  | 46   | 8            | 0          |
| Primary schools      | 8   | 47   | 40           | 5          |
| Secondary schools    | 14  | 38   | 40           | 8          |
| Special schools      | 28  | 48   | 20           | 4          |
| Pupil referral units | 15  | 50   | 29           | 5          |
| All schools          | 11  | 46   | 38           | 6          |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Behaviour                  | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.   |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.                            |
| Learning:                  | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.  |
| Overall effectiveness:     | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.  |
| 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. |
| Safety                     | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.             |

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



3 February 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Acton CofE Primary School, Nantwich, CW5 8LG**

Thank you for your warm welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting you and finding out your views.

Your school gives you an outstanding education. You are all making excellent progress because the adults are so good at helping you to learn. The teachers are extremely skilled in making sure that you get work that is just at the right level for you.

I was pleased to find that your behaviour is excellent and that you all get on extremely well together. You are particularly good at working together in class and sharing ideas. This is helping you to learn things very effectively. Although you all attain high standards in English and mathematics, girls generally do somewhat better in English and boys do somewhat better in mathematics. Your attendance is high, and you all really enjoy school.

Your headteacher and the other adults have worked very successfully to improve the school since the previous inspection. They are very good at organising things. They keep a very careful eye on how well you are all doing, so that if anyone needs extra help they can provide it quickly. We have agreed with the adults working with you that their priority for the future will be to help boys do just as well as girls in English, and for girls to catch up with the boys in mathematics by making sure that you enjoy both subjects equally. You can help by trying particularly hard with work in English and mathematics.

I hope you carry on enjoying life at school. I am confident that you will continue to work hard to make sure your school continues to go from strength to strength.

Yours sincerely

Steven Hill  
Lead Inspector

