

The Alderton Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114861
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	378943
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2012
Lead inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Ryan
Headteacher	Judith Lunn
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2008
School address	Alderton Hall Lane Loughton IG10 3HE
Telephone number	020 8508 2521
Fax number	020 8502 5698
Email address	admin@alderton-jun.essex.sch.uk

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Beale

Additional inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over eight hours was spent observing parts of 17 lessons taught by eight members of staff, holding discussions with pupils about their learning and hearing pupils read. Inspectors held meetings with staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised pupils' books, assessment data and case studies of the school's work with specific pupils. They also looked at evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. The inspection team analysed 109 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers.

Information about the school

Pupil numbers had fallen slightly in this average-sized school but are now increasing again. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are currently taught in three mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, although the number from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds has increased in recent years. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. Their needs are mostly associated with moderate learning difficulties. The school has recently received the Active Mark award and achieved Healthy Schools status. The school meets the current floor standards.

There is a Children's Centre and a Nursery on the site. This provision is not managed by the governing body and it is inspected separately.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement and the quality of teaching in mathematics.
- Achievement is inadequate because the pupils do not make sufficient progress in mathematics by the end of Year 6 from their average levels on entry. Attainment is broadly average in English but below average in mathematics. In 2011, more Year 6 pupils reached at least the expected Level 4 in writing than was seen nationally.
- Improved teaching of writing and more worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across a wide range of subjects has led to a significant rise in attainment in writing. This success has not been matched in mathematics. Shortcomings have been identified in the subject; however, action to improve the quality of teaching has not been as decisive, or as effective, as in English.
- Teaching is inadequate because weaknesses in teaching mathematics have led to the pupils making insufficient progress in the subject over time. Not enough has been expected of the pupils in the lower year groups and so learning in mathematics does not move forward rapidly enough to close gaps in their skills that emerge in the upper years.
- The school is a calm, well-ordered and harmonious environment. The pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The staff team is very sharply focused on safeguarding the well-being of the pupils at all times. Pupils are very positive that they feel safe in school, which is a view shared by their parents and carers.
- The work of the headteacher, governors and most middle leaders confirms that there is a satisfactory capacity to improve. This is demonstrated by a trend of

sustained improvement in achievement in writing, in attendance and behaviour although a significant weakness in mathematics remains.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics so that attainment is at least average by the end of Year 6 in 2012 by:
 - introducing a rigorous programme to develop staff subject knowledge and expertise in teaching mathematics and monitoring its impact
 - developing teachers' questioning skills and ensure mathematical concepts are clearly explained and taught effectively
 - consistently challenging the more-able pupils so that they achieve to the best of their ability
 - planning for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across all subjects
 - providing more effective feedback through marking on the steps pupils need to take to meet their targets
 - identifying pupils with particular talent in mathematics and providing programmes to extend their learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In 2011, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 was broadly average overall. However, their attainment in mathematics was not as high as in English and progress in mathematics was not good enough. The action to increase progress in mathematics is at the early stage of development and it is too early to show sustained and consistently rapid improvement in pupils' achievement. Previous underachievement remains, particularly for older pupils, many of whom have not made the progress expected of them since the start of Year 3. By contrast, attainment in writing has risen considerably because of the attention it has received in the recent past. In 2011, writing results were above the national average and this improvement is being sustained. Pupils not only develop and apply their writing skills within English, but also across many subjects. Attainment is broadly average in reading.

Most parents and carers feel that their children are making good progress, although the inspection found that progress is inconsistent, and is too slow in mathematics because of shortcomings in teaching and learning the subject. The most effective learning was observed in English lessons where the pupils' positive attitudes to learning and secure teaching sometimes led to their good acquisition of key reading and writing skills. Learning was good when pupils shared their ideas in discussion and worked together on tasks. However, pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding at a slower pace in mathematics than in English.

Focused support for those with special educational needs enables them to participate fully in lessons and to make satisfactory progress in English. Individual and group withdrawal sessions suitably aid the development of reading skills. The support for the learning of these pupils in mathematics does not make up for shortcomings in teaching and so they make inadequate progress. Any differences in achievement

over time by gender or ethnicity are specific to each cohort and follow no pattern.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were of the view that teaching is good and meets the needs of their children. Inspectors agree that there is some effective teaching, but more so in English than in mathematics. An example of typical English teaching was seen in a lesson with Year 5 and 6 pupils as they wrote an eye-witness report of an incident. Good pace was generated by the teacher's use of questions to check the pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. A small group of pupils identified with special educational needs were supported well and were clear that their target was to write in the first person. The support enabled them to achieve the lesson objective independently.

There is some good teaching of mathematics as illustrated in a lesson for an upper ability class of Year 5 and 6 pupils. The teacher provided interesting and challenging problems to help the pupils unlock a secret code. Pace was generated by breaking the lesson down into smaller chunks and reviewing learning at regular intervals. There was a buzz of excitement as the pupils worked together and honed their number skills well in a variety of situations. However, this quality of teaching in mathematics is the exception because of weaknesses in subject expertise. Whole-class teaching can be at a slow pace and not always challenging for the more able who sit through sessions of work they have already mastered. Teachers are not always clear in their explanations of the key skills to be acquired. Their teaching of concepts is not always secure and their questioning does not always probe pupils' mathematical understanding deeply enough. Furthermore, they do not check learning carefully in order to adapt their lessons in the light of the pupils' responses.

Teachers effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through assemblies and through well-chosen texts that enable pupils to reflect on life and cultural diversity. Sound methods are used to teach pupils to read. Additional work on letters and sounds helps pupils who are not reading at the level expected for their age to catch up. However, the planned curriculum is not always extended as effectively for those with particular talents in mathematics.

The marking of writing helps the pupils see how to improve their work and meet their targets. Teachers are increasingly providing time for the pupils to respond to their comments and correct their written work. This process is less effective in mathematics because marking does not regularly help them to eliminate errors or show how to meet their personal targets.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils respond well to teachers' consistent expectations for their behaviour. Pupils are polite and welcoming. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They listen attentively, ask and answer questions confidently and persevere with their work. Attendance is average, and is improving because of the effective action taken to tackle absence by reducing the incidence of holidays in term-time.

Pupils say that teachers follow the school behaviour code consistently. They know they can take their concerns to a member of staff and are confident that any incidents are dealt with swiftly and that their resolution is fair. Pupils say that any bullying is sorted out quickly and that they are free from harassment. The school is working hard to support the very small number of pupils who find modifying their behaviour a challenge by effectively using the expertise of the community police, family support workers and social care agencies. Inspection evidence, including pupils' records, confirms that the good behaviour seen at the time of the inspection is typical, and that behaviour over time is good and incidents of unacceptable behaviour are declining.

Pupils strongly agree that the school is a safe haven. The vast majority of parents and carers share this view. Pupils know how to identify risks and keep themselves safe when using new technology and through talks from the fire brigade and police. Pupils feel valued and undertake their responsibilities such as play leaders with pride. Year 3 pupils, in particular, speak fondly of their older 'buddies' who helped them to settle in.

Leadership and management

Improvements in writing, attendance and behaviour have come about because self-evaluation identified where action was needed and the headteacher and governors planned carefully to tackle weaknesses. This demonstrates that leaders have the capacity to effect improvement and the ability to tackle weaknesses in mathematics. The school has set more challenging targets for English and mathematics in recognition that they were not acting as a lever to raise standards rapidly in these subjects. Several changes to the leadership of mathematics in the past have led to a lack of continuity in provision and insufficient strategic direction resulting in a decline in the standards achieved. Planning to bring about improvement, for example, training to improve teachers' subject knowledge and develop more coherent schemes of work have begun under new leadership. However, there has not yet been sufficient drive to tackle weaknesses in teaching.

The curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal, moral and cultural development. Music and singing play a strong part in the pupils' life in school. Pupils' international awareness is developed through learning Spanish and understanding Spanish culture. They also gain an understanding of different lifestyles, for example when watching visiting dancers and musicians during their topic on Africa. Learning is enriched by additional activities and visits linked to topics, for example, when Year 3 pupils recently visited the Science Museum. There are many opportunities for the pupils to extend their writing but the development of numeracy is not always planned systematically across all subjects.

Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met and safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. Sound analysis of information about pupils' progress has enabled leaders to focus action to improve achievement in English and has now identified where action is needed in mathematics. Leaders are committed to narrowing gaps in learning and ensuring that the school is a harmonious and tolerant community. Parents and carers are very positive about the family learning activities that help them to support their children at home.

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).

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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.



27 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Alderton Junior School, Loughton, IG10 3HE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently and for telling us your views. We saw that you work hard and are proud of the part you play in school life. Inspectors were particularly impressed by your confident answers to their questions. These are the best things we found in your school.

- As you told us, the headteacher, staff and governors take care of you and make sure you are kept safe.
- Your very positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour contribute significantly to making the school calm and happy.
- Your attendance is improving.
- Your writing has improved considerably because you are given opportunities to develop your skills in a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers take every opportunity to promote your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- You have a clear understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and deal with any risks you might face.

While we recognise that your school does some things well, there are weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics that hold back your progress. This means that the school is not as good as it should be and we have given it a notice to improve. This means another inspector will visit your school in the next year to see how you are getting on.

You can all play your part in helping the school to get better in mathematics by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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