

Arnot St Mary CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135267
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	381857
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
Lead inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	428
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Trevor Latham
Headteacher	Mr Gary Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson
Heather Simpson
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Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 25 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 19 teachers, talked to pupils and reviewed some of their work. Meetings were held with staff and members of the governing body and there were discussions with parents and carers. Also taken into account were 78 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by pupils and members of staff. There were no comments received via the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to aid in planning the inspection. Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation which included that relating to safeguarding, the curriculum, the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, national assessment data and the school's assessments.

Information about the school

Most pupils in this larger than average sized primary school are White British. A very small but increasing minority speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above average. Almost half of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The work of the school has been recognised through the Basic Skills Award and its achievement of Healthy School status. The school is a centre of excellence for the teaching of Spanish from Nursery to Year 6 and in 2009 became National School of the Year for Spanish. The school exceeds the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

A breakfast club is provided on site by the school.

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

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school which, because of effective leadership, has improved well since the previous inspection. The curriculum is developing well and effectively promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An outstanding feature is the school’s provision for Spanish. The school is not judged outstanding overall because teaching, although good, could be improved further and pupils’ attendance is below the national average.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage from starting points which are well below those typical for their age. Their good progress continues throughout the school. Attainment in English and mathematics has risen steadily and is broadly average at the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement from pupils’ earlier starting points.
- Teaching is good overall. A small proportion is outstanding. At best, lessons are taught with good pace and lots of challenges for pupils, which engage them well in learning and developing their skills. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to take charge of their own learning and to work independently and more-able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.
- Pupils behave well. They work hard in lessons where their attentiveness is often exemplary, and get on well with one another in the playground. They are confident that help from adults is always there when needed and know how to keep themselves safe outside of school. Most pupils are punctual. Attendance is improving but remains below the national average and the school’s own challenging target.
- Leaders and managers have successfully steered the school from satisfactory to good. Their shared vision for the school, and strong commitment from all staff members to improvement, are driving forces. All contribute to the school’s accurate evaluation of its work and to the setting of clear priorities for development. Teaching is well led and securely managed. The school amply demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and thereby improve the overall quality further by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to learn independently
 - ensuring that more able pupils throughout the school are always sufficiently challenged by their work.

- Improve attendance so that it matches at least the national average.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most children join the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age. This is particularly so in their development of social skills and in language and numeracy. Although language skills, especially writing, are still generally below expectations on entering Year 1, the picture is improving, largely because the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) has a good impact. Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception. Personal development is given high priority and this quickly lays the foundation for good learning. By the end of Reception most children work securely at levels approaching those typical for children of their age in most of the things they do.

In Years 1 to 6 pupils learn well. They make good progress and achieve well over their time in the school. This is consistent with the views expressed by parents and carers. Pupils enjoy lessons and are beginning to have some say in what they want to learn in their topic work. They are very attentive and keen to contribute. There is always a good show of hands when teachers ask questions. There are good opportunities for pupils to test their ideas with partners or in groups and a good range of resources in lessons to help them learn. In one lesson pupils were given time to look over and reflect on their previous work, to look at and respond to the teacher's marking and to consider their next steps. This excellent use of learning time gave pupils a good understanding of their own progress and their personal targets for improvement.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to others. Parents and carers repeatedly commented, during the inspection, on how well supported their children are. Their learning is managed well from early identification of their learning needs to the well-planned support provided for them. A measure of this successful provision is the significant number of pupils who have improved sufficiently so that they no longer need particular support and can keep pace with their peers in the classroom. The school has been quick to identify a potential slip in the progress of some pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Rigorous checking of progress has ensured that there is no trend emerging and that those pupils overall perform better than similar pupils nationally. The increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language also make good progress. They and their families are quickly absorbed into the school

community so that pupils settle quickly, become enthusiastic learners and achieve well.

Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is average. It has fluctuated since the school opened in 2008 but there is a steadily rising trend at both key stages. Standards in reading in Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with expectations. Highly effective reading intervention in the form of one-to-one support for pupils in Year 1, combined with good teaching of phonics, is having a good impact on progress and achievement in Years 1 and 2.

Quality of teaching

There is a brisk pace to most lessons and teachers plan interesting activities that engage pupils well. The teaching of Spanish is outstanding and pupils' skills in the language are often tested in other areas, for example in mental arithmetic sessions or communication in writing with their link school in Spain. Pupils feel that the curriculum allows them to go on visits, receive visitors and to enjoy investigations which make learning fun. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. This contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by encouraging pupils to be mindful and supportive of one another. Consequently, pupils feel that they are valued and, as a result, they behave well and try hard.

Where teaching is best the pace is relentless and the whole of the lesson is filled with challenge and high expectations. Such was the case in a mathematics lesson where Year 6 pupils had to find relationships between sets of numbers and work out a common formula to solve problems. Lessons across the curriculum are planned effectively and take account of pupils' varying abilities so that most are challenged at the right level. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning through their skilful support. In one lesson, for example, the teaching assistant's very active part in helping Year 1 pupils to identify materials with different properties was a great source of fun as well as a boost to their learning. Nevertheless, on too many occasions, more could be expected of the most able groups so that progress in lessons is pushed to its limits. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They question pupils well and use assessment effectively to plan their lessons but do not encourage pupils often enough to plan their own learning and work independently. Pupils unanimously agree that teaching is good, a view shared equally among parents and carers and succinctly expressed in the comment, 'Keep up the good work'.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils typically behave well in school and this contributes significantly to their good achievement. They easily set aside all differences and enjoy each other's company. They are invariably polite and respectful toward adults and clearly understand the difference between right and wrong, reflecting their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The vast majority of parents and carers consider behaviour to be good and their children to be well cared for. Pupils themselves overwhelmingly agree. Pupils are proud of their school and care for it exceptionally well. Their love of school is aptly summed up by a pupil's comment, 'This school was made in heaven.' Pupils contribute well to the everyday life of the school through the school council and other regular routine duties which they carry out willingly. Punctuality and

attendance are high on the school's agenda and pupils have responded well over the past year to the incentives offered. However, attendance still falls short of the national average and is an aspect of behaviour for improvement. Pupils confirm strongly that they feel safe in school. They are adamant that there is no bullying and that incidents of name-calling are very rare and swiftly dealt with. Pupils are aware of potential dangers outside of school including those related to the internet and cyber-bullying. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and what that means in their daily lives.

Leadership and management

All staff and members of the governing body work as a strong team to build on the good work seen since the previous inspection. The headteacher's vision underpins the school's drive for improvement and has strongly influenced developments. Staff members comment that they are proud to work in the school and parents praise the school for the way their children grow in confidence. Frequent rigorous checking of pupils' progress and immediate action to halt underachievement have been a hallmark of effective leadership in the school, the consequence of which is seen in rising levels of attainment. Well-targeted professional development and support has seen teaching quality improve and new senior leaders slip easily into their roles and continue the momentum of improvement.

The governing body has played a crucial part in moulding the direction of the school. It is informed, supportive, challenging and effective and contributes well to the school's good capacity for continued improvement. Its statutory duties are carried out efficiently, including those related to safeguarding which are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure requirements are consistently fulfilled and improved upon where necessary.

The school provides a rich and engaging curriculum, which enthuses pupils and enables their good academic achievement and personal development. The spiritual life of the school is strong and pupils learn good social skills. Cultural development is particularly successful due to the high profile of Spanish culture and World Languages Festivals in school where pupils' cultural diversity is celebrated. There are also productive links with schools nationally and abroad. Very popular features of the curriculum are pupils' annual visit to Barcelona and a residential visit to follow outdoor pursuits. All forms of discrimination are vigorously challenged and all pupils are given equal opportunities to achieve well.

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.
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.



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Arnot St Mary CofE Primary School, Liverpool L4 4ED

Thank you very much for welcoming us so warmly into your school when we came to inspect it recently. We found your company delightful because you are so polite and well mannered. The fact that you are so proud of your school came across loud and clear! That is hardly surprising because, thanks to your hard work (and your teachers' of course), your school has made good progress since it was last inspected.

This is what we found. Arnot St Mary is a good school. That is what you said in the questionnaires and when we talked with you, and we agree. You make good progress and achieve well. The standards you reach in English and mathematics are average and improving. You are taught well by your teachers who work hard to make your lessons fun. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school generally is good and you get on very well with one another. The grown-ups in school take very good care of you and that is why you feel safe and enjoy school. Your attendance is getting better but it is not yet up to the national average and still needs to improve. Your parents and carers are also proud of your school and agree that it is a good place to be in.

Everyone, and that includes you, would like to see your school improve even further, so we have asked your teachers to make your good learning even better by making sure that those of you who are more able to do harder work are always challenged to the limits and that you all have more chances to discover and learn new things independently. We have also asked the school to continue to improve attendance until it reaches at least the national average. You can help by continuing to enjoy school as much as you do, and by getting there on time every day.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Johnson
Lead inspector

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