

# The Arches Community Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134897
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	362874
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marguerite Murphy HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	204
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Carol Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs M Ashfield
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Saughall Road Blacon, Chester Cheshire CH1 5EZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01244 390048
<b>Fax number</b>	01244370277
<b>Email address</b>	head@thearches.cheshire.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 October 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	362874

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2010

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors observed eight lessons in addition to several part-lessons and other learning opportunities such as an assembly and small-group intervention sessions. Seven teachers and several teaching assistants were seen. Inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, pupils, governors, staff and some of the school's partners. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised pupils' books, monitoring and assessment information, minutes of governing body meetings, teachers' planning, school development plans and the school's provision and documentation for safeguarding pupils. Questionnaires were analysed from 24 staff and most Key Stage 2 pupils as well as 56 from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The effectiveness of the school's safeguarding and the rigour of the governing body's procedures to ensure the health, safety and well-being of pupils and staff.
- How well the school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision meets the learning needs of children in the Reception class.
- The impact of the school's leadership and provision on the achievement of all groups of pupils and whether inspection evidence confirms an upward trend in attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The strengths of the school's care, guidance and support for pupils and the impact its partnership activity has on this.

## Information about the school

The Arches is an average-sized primary school. The nearby Children's Centre provides nursery education for most children before they enter the second part of their Early Years Foundation Stage in the school's Reception class. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Their needs are mostly related to moderate learning difficulties and emotional, social or behavioural needs. A much higher-than-average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was given a Notice to Improve because safeguarding procedures in the Early Years Foundation Stage did not meet statutory requirements. The school did not receive a monitoring visit as instead the re-inspection took place within six months of the previous one.

The school holds the Active Mark and has achieved national Healthy School status.

**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: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The Arches is a good school that provides outstanding levels of care, guidance and support for its pupils. There is a palpable sense of pride in the school that emanates from all who work and learn here. Parents and carers strongly agree that the school keeps their children safe and helps them to support their child's learning. Inspection evidence confirms the school's exemplary systems for monitoring pupils' well-being and taking swift action to support those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. There is a clear commitment to working with families and helping them to maintain improvements, for example, in attendance. The attention to detail in this work is admirable and shared by all staff, for example, in the rigorous procedures for promoting good punctuality, known as 'Every Minute Counts!'

Pupils achieve well, they enjoy school immensely and are rarely seen without a smile on their face and kind words to say to each other or the adults who work with them. Teaching is consistently good and pupils make good progress so that attainment is broadly average by the time they leave in Year 6. Although fewer pupils than is typical reach the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science, inspection evidence shows that all pupils, including those who are more able, are provided with a good level of challenge in lessons. Attainment has been on a steady upward trend for four years. For the first time, assessments in 2010 showed that Key Stage 1 pupils also reached average standards overall in reading, writing and mathematics.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory and improving. The required changes to safeguarding arrangements and outdoor learning provision were put into place immediately after the last inspection and there have been recent changes to staffing and leadership. The school recognises that it is too early to see the full impact of this work on improved outcomes for children. The teacher and key stage leader are enthusiastic about their new roles and are keen to develop the quality of provision and improve the children's achievement. However, it is acknowledged that additional training for all staff will be needed if their ambitions are to be realised, and this is already underway.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has worked relentlessly with governors, the governing body and staff to bring about the improvements to pupils' achievement over the last few years, and in addressing the issues identified at the last inspection. During her recent absence the deputy headteacher and two associate headteachers have continued this purposeful leadership which is embedded at all levels within the school. The school's good capacity for sustained improvement is clearly demonstrated by strong leadership, rigorous monitoring, evaluation and development planning and the positive impact of action plans to raise attainment.

**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

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

- In order to build on the recent improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure that provision and outcomes for children are at least good, the school should:
  - sharpen the use of assessment information to guide planning for the next steps in each child's learning
  - accelerate children's progress, particularly in early reading and writing and mathematical skills
  - provide further training for staff, including visits to outstanding providers, to deepen their knowledge of the curriculum for these young children and how best to maximise opportunities to push their learning on
  - ensure that there is a clear and concise action plan for the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including its joint working with the adjacent Children's Centre
  - when developing the consistency of assessment for learning across the school, pay due attention to a whole-school understanding of the importance of this in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Pupils are well motivated, have good attitudes to learning and respond well to being challenged in their work. These qualities contribute to their good achievement and there are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups of pupils, including those who are more able. There are well-targeted interventions and additional support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These result in good and sometimes excellent progress in their learning, independence and confidence. Pupils clearly expect that they are going to enjoy their learning and this was evident, for example, when Year 2 pupils quickly organised themselves in preparation for the start of a literacy lesson.

The level of participation and discussion in lessons is a common theme in promoting pupils' good learning and in the upward trend in the quality of pupils' writing. In a literacy lesson with the theme of senses, Year 1 pupils enjoyed a discussion which developed their skills of description and comparison so that their vocabulary was expanded. Pupils in Year 3 were challenged to explain and justify their opinions on a character in Greek mythology, giving well-considered points of view. Pupils in Year 4 learned about journalistic writing and their discussions demonstrated cooperation and mutual support for one another. Pupils in Year 6 improved their skills in the genre of adventure story writing as a result of their engagement in the 'superheroes' topic and effective prompts and challenges by the teacher and teaching assistants. Boys and girls were equally motivated to write and keen to discuss with their talking partner how their story was going to end.

Pupils feel safe and although some refer to occasional incidences of bullying or name-calling, they are unanimous in their views that adults in school care very much about them and swift action would be taken to solve any problems. Pupils say that teachers and teaching assistants listen to their ideas and will always help them if they need extra guidance.

**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

Pupils apply their increasingly well-developed basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology well in a wide range of situations. They have raised aspirations of what they want to do in the future and some understanding of how they can achieve these. Pupils understand the importance of regular attendance and punctuality and enjoy the recognition they receive for achieving this.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding, contributing to the enthusiastic and industrious atmosphere across the school. The work of teaching assistants makes a valuable contribution to pupils' progress. Adults know the pupils very well and work effectively as a team in each classroom. Teachers provide a range of interesting, often practical tasks that challenge pupils and keep them motivated and engaged in their learning. Assessment and questioning are generally used well to inform lesson planning and set targets for individual pupils. Teachers' marking is increasingly consistent in providing good feedback to pupils. However, there are times when 'next steps' are too broad for pupils to know exactly what to do next to improve. When pupils have succeeded in their tasks they are not always given a new target quickly enough to ensure that rapid progress is made.

Opportunities to share good practice in assessment more widely are sometimes missed. In Year 5, for example, pupils 'discovered' the learning objectives for a mathematics lesson

**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

and could explain their targets. Pupils' responses included: 'I've been putting numbers in order and now I have to show that I can write the same four-digit numbers in words.'

The good curriculum meets pupils' needs and has a number of strengths that illustrate the school's shared commitment to developing excellence in this area of its work. The curriculum makes a very positive contribution to pupils' enjoyment and engagement in learning and links between subjects make the learning more meaningful. Additional adults provide a range of intervention strategies to meet the learning needs of pupils of all abilities.

Very well-targeted support and the inclusion of all pupils are key features of the school's outstanding provision for their personal development and well-being. Any potential barriers to learning are identified quickly and actions put in place to remedy these. The care and guidance given to pupils and, in some cases, their families too, enable pupils to make the best of the opportunities offered to them.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has created a strong staff team that is working well with the deputy headteacher, governing body and associate headteachers to ensure the school continues to develop during her absence. Staff who completed inspection questionnaires unanimously agreed that the school is well led, they feel involved, their work is valued and their professional development needs are met.

The governing body is well informed and involved in evaluating the school's strengths and areas for development. Members of the governing body have link roles in which they work alongside staff in some monitoring activities, increasing their knowledge about pupils' learning and developments in areas of the curriculum. Safeguarding requirements are now fully met and meticulous attention is paid to child protection and safety matters.

Rigorous tracking of pupil progress and focused school improvement have led to a sustained upward trend in pupils' attainment. Subject leaders articulate commitment and enthusiasm for continuous improvement. The school works effectively with a number of partners to promote pupils' learning and well-being, both in the school and across the locality. For example, with others in the 'Blacon Education Village' group of schools and the Children's Centre, consistent policies and procedures have been developed and staff training opportunities shared. Recent work in liaison with a healthcare trust and a charitable organisation enabled the schools to jointly write a programme to deliver a policy for sex and relationships education. The school's leaders and the Children's Centre

**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

manager have appropriate plans to develop further their work to enhance continuity across the Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

The school's 'Dream' motto and its inclusive ethos help pupils to feel part of a cohesive community which extends beyond the new school gates. The school has developed effective links to broaden pupils' understanding of the global and local community and their role within it. Equalities are championed to ensure that all pupils have access to a good quality education which provides good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The school acted swiftly, in partnership with the local authority, to deal with the weaknesses noted at the previous inspection. The arrangements for safeguarding children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now good. The opportunities for children to learn out of doors, and the resources for this, have improved significantly.

There have been adjustments to staffing this school year, with a change of teacher and an additional teaching assistant. Also, responsibility for leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has changed and is now carried by the Key Stage 1 leader.

When children start in Reception they can usually do less than most children their age. They make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They develop good attitudes to school and learning. They gain confidence to choose from the range of interesting activities on offer and learn to sustain concentration on the things they choose to do. However, they do less well in early reading and writing and mathematical work. This means that, taken overall, children's progress is satisfactory. Last year's Reception class reached an average standard in personal, social and emotional development but their communication, language and literacy skills and early mathematical



**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

skills were below average. The school's records show that the present Reception children have made satisfactory progress in their first half-term.

The Reception classroom and outdoor area are well-organised and resourced to promote children's growing independence and social development and to support worthwhile, purposeful play. Staff create a calm and encouraging atmosphere and take pains to provide a range of activities which appeal to the children. For example, on the 'Builders Day' children delighted in donning high visibility jackets and hard hats and playing with wooden bricks and a toy cement mixer and pneumatic drill. Nonetheless, opportunities are missed to intervene judiciously in children's play in order to push their learning on.

Staff assess children's progress perceptively and keep careful records of their achievements but do not always make best use of these in their planning.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers who returned inspection questionnaires were extremely positive about the school and what it provides for their children. A very small minority of parents did not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspection evidence found that pupils' behaviour is consistently good. Inspectors observed no incidents of poor behaviour and pupils say that if this does occur, staff deal with it quickly and fairly.

A small group of parents who met with inspectors spoke very highly of the school and were keen to express their thanks and appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the headteacher and staff.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Arches Community Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 204 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	68	16	29	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	73	15	27	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	32	57	19	34	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	63	21	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	63	20	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	55	25	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	52	25	45	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	50	26	46	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	57	24	43	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	50	22	39	5	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	50	24	43	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	55	23	41	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	64	18	32	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



22 October 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of The Arches Community Primary School, Chester CH1 5EZ**

Thank you for making the inspection team welcome when we visited your school recently. Your help was very important when we were finding out about how the school looks after all of its pupils and helps them to learn. You answered our questions and talked to us about your work and what things you particularly enjoy.

We found that the Arches is a good school, that it is well led and you are right to be proud of it and proud of your own part in its success. Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are really good. We enjoyed seeing your enthusiasm in lessons and this is helping you to make good progress in your learning and personal development. Teaching is good and adults provide you with challenges to stretch you and make you think, and you are keen to do well. Your writing is improving particularly well and standards are continuing to rise across the school.

The improvements made to safeguarding since the last inspection means that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now much more secure. In fact, the new electronic gates also encourage all of you to make sure you get into school on time every morning, so that's a good thing! In fact, the school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for each of you.

Now that the work to improve the safety and outdoor provision in the Reception class has finished, the school is ready to develop this further so that the youngest pupils can make rapid progress in their early learning goals. Inspectors discussed with the school's leaders and governors how this might be done and suggested targets for improvement. Assessment and target-setting may also be reviewed across the school, so make sure you know your targets and ask for new challenges as soon as you have achieved your latest goals!

Well done to all of you and keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marguerite Murphy

Her Majesty's Inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**