

# Acton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124686
<b>Local Authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	359744
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 February 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Dawson

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>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	105
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Diane Moye
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie O'Neill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	Lambert Drive Acton, Sudbury CO10 0US
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 377089
<b>Fax number</b>	01787 313734
<b>Email address</b>	admin@actonschool.org.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed eight lessons, taught by five teachers and a higher level teaching assistant. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, looked at the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, teachers' planning, tracking and assessment systems and pupils' work. They also analysed 74 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- They explored how well the school's assessment systems are used to meet individual pupil's needs and to inform curriculum planning.
- They investigated whether pupils know how to improve their work and if they are involved in evaluating their own performance.
- They looked at the involvement of the governors and school staff in evaluating the school's performance and setting plans for improvement.

## Information about the school

This village school is smaller than the average primary. It will become a full primary school in 2013 and pupils now in Year 3 will remain in school until Year 6. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is smaller than in most schools. There is an average percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities but, at present, no pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Fewer pupils than in most schools join or leave other than at the usual time. An independent playgroup, which also provides a breakfast club, is accommodated on the school site. This will be inspected separately. The present headteacher joined the school at the beginning of this term. The school has Healthy Schools' status and has gained the Sports Mark and the Eco Schools Green Flag Award.

**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**

**3**

## Main findings

This is a good school where pupils are well-cared for. Adults are particularly effective when responding to pupils' social and emotional needs and this care is often extended to embrace the whole family. It provides pupils with good personal and social skills, generating empathy with others and a strong foundation on which to build their futures. Teaching and learning, which were good at the time at the last inspection, remain good and pupils continue to make good progress.

The governing body is becoming increasingly involved in the life of the school. However, until very recently it, and the staff, had little responsibility in evaluating the school's performance or planning for the future. This is changing. The new headteacher is swiftly identifying the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The staff and governing body have appreciated the way she is including them in this process and are rising to the challenge. The school was asked to improve the systems for tracking pupils' progress at the end of the last inspection. Unfortunately, because of technical problems, the tracking system has only recently been established and teachers are not yet using this to identify subtle changes in the rate of pupils' progress in order to support or challenge them. There are no systems in place to identify any common gaps in pupils' learning in order to adjust the curriculum to eradicate them. However, pupils now have targets for improvement that are shared with their parents and carers and most have a good understanding of how to improve their work. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory overall because the recent changes and new leadership have not yet had time to have had an impact.

Children start school with the expected knowledge and skills for their age, although there are variations from year to year. Their good progress throughout the school ensures that they leave the school with above average attainment for their age. They enjoy their lessons and work hard. Pupils behave well and appreciate the good range of additional activities available to them. Attendance, although average, has fallen since the last inspection and the school has not been sufficiently rigorous in addressing this. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and make a good contribution to the school community. They are knowledgeable about world events, swift to respond to the needs of others, and, because of the effective way the school promotes community cohesion, have a good understanding of contrasting lifestyles. The school's Healthy School's status, sports and Eco awards, demonstrate strengths in the curriculum in these areas. This, as well as good provision for the arts, ensures pupils know how to take care of themselves and their environment.

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

- In order to help each pupil make the best possible progress:

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- ensure the new tracking systems are used effectively to identify and respond to any changes in the rate of pupils' progress
- analyse the outcomes of assessments of their learning, identifying any common gaps in their knowledge and skills in order to fine-tune the curriculum to address them.
- Improve systems for promoting good attendance, ensuring it is celebrated and that pupils and their parents and carers are aware of its importance.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils make good progress in their lessons. Most concentrate well and ensure that their work is well-presented, although there are a few pupils who find it difficult to listen to others and wait their turn to speak. Pupils know what is expected of them and have individual targets to work towards. In some classes, pupils evaluate their work and are encouraged to set their own targets. This helps them to take responsibility for their learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have very good support and make good progress. A few other pupils' books show that, on occasions, their rate of progress slows or they spend too long reinforcing an already acquired skill. The interesting lessons and good relationships with their teachers make learning an enjoyable experience. The national assessments at the end of Year 2 show generally above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils use information and communication technology across the curriculum well. Their artwork is of a high standard and a recent award for singing illustrates their successes across the arts. They have a good knowledge of their local village and its history. They support national disasters and have links with a German school, a school in Harwich and regular correspondence with troops in Afghanistan. These activities promote a good understanding of world affairs. Their above average knowledge, skills and understanding of democracy through the school council prepare them well for their future lives.

Pupils feel safe and secure in school and are confident to confide in an adult. They respond well to the thoughtful and thorough support for their personal, social and health education. The school council has been involved in improving the school through, for example, seeking ways to promote good behaviour. Pupils read prayers at lunchtime and introduce the teacher at assemblies. Others, on 'scrape' duty, ensure any food left at lunchtime is composted.

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*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>	2
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?

Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in engaging their pupils with interesting lessons. Adults have high expectations of their pupils and most encourage them to evaluate their learning and that of their peers. This helps pupils to take responsibility for improving their learning and to appreciate others' skills. Teachers' marking is generally helpful, although, in a very small minority of books it is rather negative with few suggestions for improvement. The objectives of each lesson are shared with the pupils and indicate what they must, should or could achieve so pupils know what to aim for. There is mutual respect between pupils and adults. Some teachers are skilled in combining different subject skills within lessons. For example, pupils in Year 1 had written addresses on envelopes as part of their handwriting lesson and topic. The teacher used these as a resource for a lesson involving ordering odd and even numbers. At the end of the lesson, pupils discussed whether they or their peers had achieved their handwriting targets.

The curriculum is interesting and well-resourced. The walls are rich in displays of pupils' well-presented and interesting work in humanities and the arts. The wide range of clubs, visits and visitors to school enrich pupils' learning. The core subjects of English, mathematics and information and communication technology are well-crafted and ensure that pupils build on their previous learning. Curriculum planning ensures that pupils have a secure grounding in a range of techniques which they apply across the curriculum. However, there are no systems in place to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills

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in order to adjust the curriculum to meet their needs even more precisely. The most-able pupils are given opportunities to extend their learning and there are some opportunities for pupils to follow their own line of enquiry.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective and thorough. The school works well with external agencies to provide additional support to ensure these pupils' needs are met. However, the groups of pupils who are withdrawn from the classroom for additional support for learning tend to be long term. The limited systems for tracking progress have resulted in a lack of flexibility in providing short, intensive support in response to any individual dips in achievement.

This is not the case for pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties or traumas at home. Adults are swift to provide pastoral support for pupils and their families, involving other agencies when appropriate.

Pupils are cared for very well. Procedures for dealing with accidents or unacceptable behaviour are consistent and thorough. Pupils are encouraged to make decisions and to play a part in the smooth running of the school. Very effective liaison with the playgroup ensures that pupils join the Reception class confidently and happily. There are secure systems for ensuring a smooth transfer to the middle school. However, although the school is thorough in ensuring pupils' safety, they have not responded sufficiently to the steady increase in pupils' absence over the last two years.

*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>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school has continued to run smoothly and efficiently since the last inspection. The good teaching has been effective in ensuring that pupils make good progress. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teaching and learning have been monitored, but this has been in very general terms and has not had an impact on improving teachers' skills further. However, teaching assistants have been encouraged to gain additional qualifications and have enhanced pupils' learning as a result. Governance is satisfactory. The school fulfils all the requirements for safeguarding pupils well and staff have regular up-to-date training to ensure this continues. The school's evaluation of its performance identifies its strengths but staff and governors have not been involved in helping to identify weaknesses and plan for improvement. The new headteacher is thoroughly and accurately evaluating the school's performance, involving staff and governors, and is beginning to identify where improvements are needed. It is clear that all leaders, managers and governors are fully supporting her in the process of school self-

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evaluation. However, it is too soon for there to have been any measurable impact on school improvement.

This is a school where the needs of individuals are paramount and equality of opportunity is embedded throughout the school. This is especially evident in the pastoral support provided for pupils and parents and carers. When parents live apart, for example, the school makes sure that both parents are kept informed about their child's progress. Many parents and carers support the school in the classroom or through fundraising. They are well-informed through the website and regular consultation meetings. Governors are increasingly involved in seeking their views. They consulted parents, for example, on what attributes they would wish to see in a new headteacher. The school promotes community cohesion well. There are strong links with the church and the school held an art exhibition in the village. It holds termly quiz nights. Pupils learn French and have a good knowledge of a range of major faiths and have had visits, for example, from a representative of the local Jewish faith community. The school has plans to develop links with other communities further by extending pupils' communication with contrasting schools in England and Europe, and a school in Sri Lanka.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>3</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

Children have a good start to their school life. They settle in swiftly because of the excellent links with the playgroup. Children often share activity areas and the teacher and playgroup leader plan together so that provision is seamless. Similar systems are in place for transition into Year 1 so that children are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. There is a good mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities which are well-focused and extend learning well so that children make good progress. The outdoor environment is used effectively and children have their own garden. They enjoyed looking



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at sunflower seeds through a magnifying glass and planting them during the inspection. Some children in the Reception class this year have lower-than-expected listening, communication and social skills for their age. The adults are aware of this and activities are planned to help to extend these skills. While there has been good progress in developing speech and social skills, listening skills remain underdeveloped for some children. Occasionally, adults' hard work in promoting good listening is undone because they respond to children who interrupt and call out. Adults track children's progress effectively and know what each child needs to learn next. For example, there are records of each child's knowledge of the sounds letters make or the number of objects he or she can count accurately. Children are well cared for and are encouraged to take care of themselves.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

There was a well-above-average number of responses to the parental questionnaire and an overwhelming majority of parents and carers are happy about the work of the school. A very small minority expressed concern about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection found that the few pupils who find it difficult to maintain acceptable behaviour are dealt with appropriately.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Acton Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 105 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	68	21	28	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	76	16	22	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	44	59	25	34	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	53	29	39	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	65	25	34	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	65	22	30	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	65	25	34	0	0	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)	42	57	27	36	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	65	24	32	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	54	26	35	5	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	59	23	31	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	49	34	46	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	70	21	28	1	1	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and 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 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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.**



14 February 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Acton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Sudbury, CO10 0US**

Thank you all for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. We also enjoyed looking at all your lovely work on the walls. You should all be proud of all you achieve.

You are all part of a good school where you are well-taught and make good progress. This means that, by the time you leave school, most of you are working at higher levels than others of the same age. Well done! We have asked your teachers to do some things to help make your learning even better. Teachers have a new electronic system that records the levels you are working at when they assess your work. This is still very new and we want them to use it to track your progress to make sure that you are learning as well as they expect you to. We know that sometimes your learning slows or suddenly becomes more rapid. When teachers use the new system, it will help to give you extra boosts of support or help you extend your learning. We have also asked your teachers to look carefully at anything you do not understand so that they can change their planning to make sure there are no gaps in your learning.

You have told us how much you enjoy school but, over the last two years, more of you have been absent from school on occasions. We have asked those in charge of the school to make sure everyone knows how important school is and to celebrate good attendance. We are sure that you will do your bit by ensuring that you do not miss school unless you have to.

Your school is a friendly and happy place and the adults help you to learn the skills you need for your futures. You have made your new headteacher very welcome and are helping her to quickly learn all about you and your school. We wish you all the very best for the future as your school continues to grow and change.

Yours sincerely

Judith Dawson  
Lead inspector

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