

# Acacias Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105401
<b>Local Authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	363696
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 April 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike McLachlan

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	393
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr John Commons
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Philip Webster
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 April 2008
<b>School address</b>	Alexandra Drive Burnage, Manchester Lancashire M19 2WW
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 2241598
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<b>Email address</b>	head@acacias.manchester.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 22 lessons and 15 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development plans and self-evaluation form, school policy documents, safeguarding arrangements and minutes of management and governing body meetings, and the School Improvement Partner's reports. The responses to the pupils' questionnaires were scrutinised along with 106 parental questionnaires.

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

- The teachers' assessments and pupils' work were scrutinised to test the accuracy of the 2010 assessments and to check the school's claim that achievement and learning and progress for current pupils are outstanding.
- The pupils' behaviour, and particularly their contribution to supporting each other and working together, was looked at in detail to check the school's claim that they are outstanding.
- The leadership of the school was reviewed at all levels to assess the school's capacity to meet the needs of current pupils and the demands of an increasing number of pupils.
- The response of the school to the two key issues from the last inspection report of improving writing and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage were explored to test if the school had made the improvements required.

## Information about the school

The school is larger than average and has grown in size since the previous inspection. It will have two forms of entry as it moves into a new building to accommodate this increase in numbers in January 2012. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority-ethnic groups is very high. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also very high. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the number with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school has achieved the national healthy schools standard, Manchester Healthy School Gold status and the Financial Management Standard in Schools 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?**

**1**

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

**1**

## Main findings

Acacias Community School is outstandingly effective in meeting the needs and raising the attainment of its richly diverse population. Outstanding drive, ambition and focused leadership, never complacent despite its obvious successes, have created an outstandingly caring and highly successful school. Pupils, parents and carers are delighted to be part of this vibrant and harmonious community. The school is rightly held in high regard by the local community and is increasing its size to meet this growing demand. It is about to move into a splendid new building which offers many exciting opportunities particularly to the Early Years Foundation Stage for outdoor play and learning. A significant strength of the school is that, while this preparation has occupied substantial leadership time, significant progress has been made in improving the current provision and sustaining pupils' high attainment and personal development A remarkable achievement!

The school welcomes pupils from a very wide cultural mix, for example, 16 languages are spoken across the school community. Pupils from all these backgrounds, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress from what, for many pupils, are very low skills on entry to the school, particularly in language and communication. Consequently, attainment is high by the time pupils leave the school. The written work, for example, seen across the school and particularly in Year 6 is of a very high quality, both in the depth and complexity of content and in the quality of presentation. The pupils and teachers are rightly proud of this achievement. This is the direct result of outstanding teaching and a very rich, exciting and extensively developed curriculum which stretches well beyond school through the many visits and residential opportunities available to pupils.

Pupils feel very safe and thoroughly enjoy school. This is due to the outstanding care, guidance and support pupils receive and the exceptional emphasis placed on developing pupils' personal development skills as well as their levels of attainment. Playtimes are delightful to watch as older pupils take responsibility for organising activities supporting individual children who need help to take part or who would just prefer to have a quiet time. Safeguarding arrangements are good and pupils, and their parents and carers, say they are very safe, well cared for and are very confident to move on to their next school. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are proud to behave well, for example, encouraging each other to line up at the end of play or in assemblies. Attendance is above average, an excellent outcome given the support the school gives to its community to enable them to meet and share in the various religious celebrations and holidays.

Leadership is outstanding overall but has rightly identified, given the increasing size of the school, the need to share responsibilities across a larger group of staff; plans are in place to do this. The school knows its strengths very well and constantly strives to improve on what is already outstanding provision. Response to the issues raised in the previous

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inspection has been determined, focused and very successful. The overall quality of writing is now exceptional and the Early Years Foundation Stage is now strongly good and poised to become excellent. The school has again rightly identified the need to further develop the recently introduced techniques of assessing children's learning through outdoor play. The school therefore has outstanding capacity to improve.

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

- Extend the leadership skills of more staff and governors by implementing the plans to train more middle leaders and governors so that they are able to lead, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of the new school's work.
- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly by further developing the techniques used to assess children's learning through outdoor play, so that it becomes outstanding when it moves into its new purpose-built accommodation.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Learning seen in lessons is outstanding in almost all age groups and particularly for pupils in their final year in the school. Pupils are attentive, excited by the challenges given to them and keen to do well. They show, as evidenced by the extensive writing seen in both English work and the wide-ranging topic work, high levels of resilience and determination to use the skills they have learned to good effect. Some of the writing seen was of a very high quality indeed, not only creative but also deeply analytical. For example, a Year 6 pupil crisply and concisely wrote, 'Although the sports shoe is a success, there are a few inadequate aspects in its design.' and then went on to detail these at length. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is high and this represents outstanding achievement given the pupils' below average attainment on entry to the school. The national tests for Year 6 were not taken last year, but rigorous and robust teacher assessments, moderated in conjunction with another school, confirmed these pupils matched the high outcomes and outstanding progress seen in previous years. Work seen during the inspection also showed these high standards have been maintained. The very specific language needs of the many different minority-ethnic groups are exceptionally well catered for through high-quality teaching and focused support for those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Year 6 pupils are confident, articulate and accept high levels of personal and group responsibilities. Their contribution to their school and their community is exceptional. Pupils across the school delight in supporting each other in lessons or in the playground. The playground leaders, school council and other pupils take their support roles very seriously, showing high levels of care for their friends and peers. Pupils show very high levels of understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle as shown by their enthusiastic approach to physical education lessons and their very active play at lunchtimes. The rich, diverse cultural mix is used as a deep and extensive resource by the school to support pupils' personal development. This community works and plays exceptionally well together in harmony where all cultures and beliefs are shared, valued and celebrated. Hence pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding.

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

Overall teaching is outstanding and nothing seen during the inspection was less than good. Teachers have a very strong understanding of how to meet the needs of the diverse population of the school. Lessons are planned sensitively and exceptionally well to take into account the very varied language skills of pupils, particularly lower down the school, so that all are able to access the diverse and rich curriculum on offer. The development of speaking and listening and particularly of reading and writing is exceptional. Very effective teaching promotes mathematical skills very well and, consequently, attainment is well above national averages. However, opportunities for exploration and investigation in mathematics are not as well developed. Assessment to support learning is good. There are examples of high-quality, analytical marking in English and topic work which challenges pupils to improve and gives good advice to support this. Marking in mathematics, however, is not consistently informative.

The outstanding curriculum provides a rich range of experiences which promotes literacy and numeracy development strongly. A recent move to teaching other subjects through topic work is paying dividends as pupils are able to learn other subjects in real contexts and in depth in specific aspects. The topic books seen were of particularly high quality with extensive, well structured and extremely well presented work. Pupils say they enjoy this approach and it is evident in the quality of their work. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activity. For example, during the inspection, Year 1 and 2 pupils were off-

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site at a singing festival and also visiting the local science museum and Year 6 wrote extensively about how they had personally developed through facing physical challenges during a residential visit.

The care, guidance and support for this very culturally diverse community are outstanding. Support in early English language acquisition, the individual care for specific pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those pupils very new to the area and the school is exceptionally well focused. The use of a very wide range of support agencies and the excellent work of the support staff in lessons and beyond is a key feature of this outstanding care. This is very well evidenced by the pupils', parents' and carers' overwhelming endorsement of all the school offers. Transition arrangements into the nursery department and then into other key stages and on to secondary school are of a very high quality, so pupils quickly settle and achieve and enjoy at each stage of their school career.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher, his deputy and team leaders and the business manager. Improving outcomes resulting from an intense focus on staff development and particularly in developing the teaching of reading and writing are evidence of outstanding leadership of teaching and learning. The opportunities and challenges presented by the new building and the increasing population are well understood and the school has good plans in hand to improve and extend leadership to meet this challenge. For example, more staff are to be trained to take on monitoring and evaluating roles. The good governing body provides effective support and rightly recognises the opportunity to step up its level of support and challenge as the new school develops. Outstanding achievement and outcomes across all groups of pupils are testimony to the school's highly-effective approach to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Safeguarding systems are good. The school has thoroughly evaluated the potential hazards in the current school so that all pupils are very well cared for in this old and outdated site. The school's promotion of community cohesion is excellent. This is a very harmonious and cohesive community and the school works extremely well with all groups and uses this diversity to great effect to promote pupils' personal development and their understanding of the wider world. Given the outstanding outcomes the school gives outstanding value for money.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

The Early Years Foundation stage has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Teaching is consistently good and there are examples of outstanding teaching, particularly in the way activities are related to the current themes. For example, the Reception class was a delight to watch as they danced while changing from 'egg to tadpole to frogs' with great enthusiasm and precision. Similarly, Nursery children were enthralled by the live chicks that had hatched in their classroom. Teachers have very good knowledge of children's development needs based on accurate assessment when they start school. Recent developments, particularly in developing learning through play in the classroom and outside areas, are resulting in substantially more children reaching age-related expectations by the time they move into Year 1. However, there is still a significant minority at an early stage of development. Very close liaison with the Key Stage 1 team ensures that the specific needs of the children are known and planned for. This ensures transition between classes is excellent and is one of the notable elements of the outstanding care, guidance and support all pupils receive. Consequently, by the time children move on to the main school, while their attainment is still below average, this represents good progress academically and personally from their very low starting points.

Leadership has been strengthened since the previous inspection through good links with known outstanding providers. A very well planned and executed investment in accommodation and equipment and material supports outdoor learning. This investment, made despite the impending move into the new school, is a sign of the high importance placed by the school on improving this phase. Innovative uses of technology to record children's achievements have been introduced recently to capture children's learning as and when it happens. While this is beginning to be used effectively to record progress, work is rightly in hand to refine the assessment process in order for this aspect to become outstanding.



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*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:	2
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

The overwhelming view of parents and carers is that Acacias provides extremely well for their children's needs in a very safe and happy environment. The proportion who strongly agree with the school's work is very high, particularly in relation to their children enjoying school, feeling safe, being informed about progress, the way the school meets individual needs, the way the school is led and their overall satisfaction with their child's experience in school. Inspectors endorse these views and found many aspects of the school to be outstanding and nothing less than good.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Acacias 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 106 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 393 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	72	30	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	71	31	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	73	69	30	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	65	61	37	35	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	72	68	33	31	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	65	61	39	37	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	62	40	38	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)	56	53	41	39	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	61	36	34	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	57	39	37	0	0	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	62	58	36	34	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	68	64	36	34	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	64	37	35	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.**



13 April 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Acacias Community Primary School, Manchester, M19 2WW**

Thank you for the way you greeted us and shared your experiences of life in your school. It was great pleasure to spend our time with you. We, like you and your parents and carers, think you go to an outstanding school. We were impressed by the way you support each other in lessons and particularly in the playground. It is easy to see that you all get on so well together and enjoy sharing your own cultures and experiences, for example, when you celebrate each other's festivals.

You clearly enjoy being at school very much. The delightful stories from last year's leavers of lasting friendships forged, fears and challenges conquered and skills and knowledge gained, are testimony to how well you achieve and enjoy your time at your school. Because of this, your test results at the end of Year 6 are always well above average and you make outstanding progress while in school. We were very impressed by the quality, detail and length of your writing and the effort you put into your presentation. Well done! Your teachers and the support team are excellent, so you are very well taught and are given a very wide range of exciting and challenging activities in school and through the many visits you make. The care you receive from your staff is first class so all of you feel safe and well supported.

We think your school is very well led and the staff have been planning very well for the move to your new school, which must be a really exciting event for you all. Your teachers know you are at a great school but also want to make it even better so are looking to extend the way they lead the school. They have also put a lot of work into improving the opportunities for creative outdoor play in the Nursery and Reception classes and have plans to make that even better when you move. We wish you all the success in your new building. Keep up your exceptionally good work and particularly the great way you work and play together.

Yours sincerely

Mike McLachlan

Lead inspector

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