

Astbury St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111333
Local Authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	356893
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Adrian Guy HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Donna Graham
Headteacher	Mrs Jenny Wagstaffe
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors observed nine lessons and five teachers. They saw teaching in each of the five classes in the school. They held meetings with school staff, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. They also held telephone conversations with a local authority representative and a small number of parents and carers. They observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents such as those relating to safeguarding pupils; the teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and their progress; the school improvement plan and documents identified by the school to support its self-evaluation. Inspectors also took into consideration the 59 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those returned by staff and pupils.

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

- Whether, given their starting points, all pupils are supported and challenged in their learning so that they are able to make consistently good progress and attain the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Whether the school's provision, and in particular the quality of teaching, ensures equality of opportunity and has enabled all groups of pupils, especially those who are less able or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make good progress.
- Whether, through self-evaluation, leaders, managers and members of the governing body have an accurate grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and can demonstrate a capacity for sustained improvement.
- Whether the Early Years Foundation Stage secures the highest quality outcomes and learning for all children through successful provision, leadership and management.
- Whether the school is effectively developing pupils' understanding of diversity and promoting all aspects of community cohesion.

Information about the school

Astbury St Mary's is a smaller than average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is under half the national average. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background is lower than average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The percentage with a statement of special educational needs is about half that of the national average and, in comparison to most schools, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower. The number of children joining and leaving the school part-way through their education is lower than the national average.

Since the last inspection the school has had several changes in staff and a number of staff absences. The school has been awarded Healthy School status, Inclusion Quality Mark, Dyslexia Friendly Schools award and the Green Flag Eco 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Astbury St Mary's is a school very much at the heart of its community. There is a strong sense of its religious ethos which pervades all of its work. The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Some aspects of the school's work are good, particularly those concerning pupils' well-being, the curriculum, the care, guidance and support for pupils and safeguarding procedures. Pupils' contribution to the community and the extent to which they adopt healthy life styles are outstanding. Parents and carers have a generally positive view of the school and appreciate the care shown by staff and the range of clubs and activities offered to children.

In the last two years the proportion of pupils at the end of Year 6 gaining the expected level for their age in English and mathematics has been above average. However, attainment at the end of Year 2 has declined. This is because pupils' progress across the school is variable. The majority make satisfactory progress and some progress well, particularly where teaching is stronger and for those who receive additional tuition. This was reflected in the majority of lessons observed, where pupils' progress was satisfactory.

The school takes good care of its pupils and enables them to progress well in aspects of their personal development. Successful partnerships with a range of outside agencies promote pupils' excellent health and well-being and result in pupils knowing very well what they need to do to live healthily. Pupils contribute extremely well to their school and local community and take full advantage of a wide range of clubs and activities beyond the classroom, which has enabled them to achieve success in local and regional sporting competitions.

A strong emphasis on establishing a religious ethos in the school is reflected in pupils' spiritual development which is a strength of the school. This is extended into the local community and links with a school in Kenya add to pupils' global perspectives. Pupils' moral and social development is reflected in their good behaviour and the extent to which they get on together, cooperate well and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' understanding and experience of cultural diversity and different communities within the United Kingdom is less well developed. This is because the school has not fully evaluated its work to promote community cohesion.

Lessons are orderly and pupils' behaviour makes a positive contribution to learning. Pupils are given different tasks according to their abilities; however, these are not always challenging and learning does not move forward at a fast enough pace. Relationships between adults and pupils are supportive and nurturing but there is an over-emphasis on adult direction and opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. Feedback to pupils is positive. However, teachers do not clearly identify what the features of successful learning look like. As a result, pupils are unsure of exactly what they need to do to succeed and this affects their progress.

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School leaders and the governing body have established a clear vision and have set out plans which identify actions to achieve this. These plans do not, however, include criteria against which they can measure their progress and evaluate their success. Consequently, the extent to which the school can be held to account is weakened. Senior leaders' self-evaluation of the school's current effectiveness although accurate in some areas was over-generous in others. The school has worked hard at developing systems to track pupils' progress and attainment. However, its evaluation is not based as well as it could be on accurate interpretation of data. Despite this there are strengths in leadership and management. Staff morale is high and all staff returning the questionnaires are proud to work at Astbury St Mary's, feel involved and know what the school is trying to achieve. The school has worked effectively with a range of partners, particularly in regard to transition arrangements and the provision of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. The emerging improvements in levels of attendance and the recovery in pupils' attainment in the last three years reflect the school's satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in order to raise pupils' attainment in Key Stage 1 and increase the proportion of pupils making good progress across the school by:
 - ensuring that pupils understand exactly what they need to do to succeed
 - developing more opportunities for pupils to be independent in their learning
 - ensuring that activities are challenging and pupils' learning moves forward at a brisk pace.
- Develop pupils' understanding and experience of cultural diversity and different communities within the United Kingdom by:
 - strengthening plans to include all aspects of diversity
 - ensuring the impact of actions is fully evaluated.
- Further develop leadership and management and enable the governing body to hold the school to account more effectively by:
 - ensuring rigorous and incisive evaluation of the school's data, monitoring and effectiveness
 - refining the school development plan to include measurable criteria against which progress can be measured and success evaluated.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Children enter the school with overall starting points that are generally above those typical for their age and achieve good outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils' attainment in the end of Key Stage 2 tests is above average. This reflects satisfactory progress given pupils' starting points and matches pupils' progress seen in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported, which enables them to make similar progress to their peers.

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Pupils enjoy their time at school. Where teaching is stronger, pupils are interested in their work and keen to do well. When given tasks that they find stimulating, such as using computers to solve mathematical problems, their concentration and behaviour make a strong contribution to their learning and progress. Pupils are keen to get on with things for themselves. Pupils' attention becomes limited when they are expected to listen to the teacher. Often, as a result, their attention wanders, they become disengaged and their progress slows.

The school pays particular attention to ensuring that all procedures relating to pupils' safety are fully in place and adhered to. As a result, pupils and their parents and carers are confident that they are kept safe in school. Pupils' behaviour is good, although responses to the pupils' survey showed that many felt it could be even better. Where there are occasionally incidents of unacceptable behaviour pupils are confident that these will be dealt with by staff. Attendance had declined in previous years and is currently average. An increasingly robust approach to tackling attendance issues in recent months has begun to reduce levels of absence.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

¹ 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 ensure the learning atmosphere in classrooms is calm and orderly. They help pupils to work well together in groups. For example, Year 6 pupils sensibly discussed different viewpoints regarding coastal erosion. In better lessons teaching ensures pupils

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are clear about what they need to do to move their learning on. However, in the majority of lessons during the inspection pupils were uncertain about what they had to do to succeed. Teachers are up to date with their marking. Feedback to pupils is positive and celebrates their achievements. However, the guidance pupils are offered is variable and does not consistently help them to understand how to improve their work and move to the next stages of learning.

The curriculum is adapted well and themes are used effectively to cover different subjects and requirements of the national curriculum. This is further enhanced by a rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities which is taken up by most pupils. There is a high take-up of sporting and physical activity which makes a strong contribution to pupils' well-being.

Good care, guidance and support for pupils are at the heart of the school's ethos. The impact of the school's supportive and nurturing approach is evident in pupils' strong personal development. Pupils who are vulnerable due to their circumstances are supported well because of effective links with external agencies. This contributes strongly to their positive personal and social outcomes. The school is beginning to see an impact of its work with parents, carers and the local authority to promote pupils' attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The staff team is fully committed to the well-being of every child. They are dedicated and morale is good. The school has managed a period of turnover in teaching staff satisfactorily. The progress of groups of pupils across different subjects is now being tracked. However, this is not evaluated as well as it could be. The school development plan identifies key and appropriate priorities to move the school forward but lacks rigour in terms of measurable targets for improvement. The governing body are supportive and fulfil their statutory duties satisfactorily. During a period of change the acting Chair of the Governing Body has identified training needs and moved swiftly to ensure these are addressed. However, governors' ability to hold the school to account is limited by weaknesses in self-evaluation and development planning. Overall, the school has good relationships with parents and carers, who have a range of opportunities to share their views. They receive good information about how their children are getting along and about how they can assist them to learn. Parents and carers are kept well informed about what is happening at the school. Robust procedures for ensuring the safeguarding and well-being of all pupils meet requirements and are effective in ensuring pupils are kept safe and well cared for. Senior leaders succeed in tackling discrimination and ensuring that

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every child is valued and pupils with a range of disabilities are welcomed into the school. Groups of pupils who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances are well supported and achieve as well as their peers. The school works satisfactorily to promote community cohesion through links with the church, local community and a school in Kenya. However, the impact of such links is not evaluated and opportunities to promote understanding and experience of other communities and diversity in the United Kingdom are limited.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Since the last inspection the school has moved the Reception classroom and carried out extensive work to create a stimulating and well-resourced learning environment.

Children are well cared for and positive attitudes and attributes are fostered. They progress satisfactorily and, when they start Year 1, most are working at or above the expected levels for their age. Learning is organised to ensure that all aspects and requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met. However, activities are often overly directed by adults and children lack opportunities to learn independently and make choices. For example, during one lesson many were excited at the prospect of an activity involving a dinosaur trail; however, there were missed opportunities for children to explore this idea for themselves.

Good leadership and management are evident in several features: the improvements in the environment; good transition and safeguarding arrangements; improving trends in outcomes; and the strong links with parents and carers that give them opportunities to see and discuss how their child is doing. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has put in place comprehensive tracking and assessment of children's learning and has identified areas requiring improvement. However, progress in these areas is affected by insufficient challenge in some learning activities provided.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost half of parents and carers returned questionnaires to the inspection team. Inspectors also spoke to some parents and carers and considered their responses along with those expressed in the questionnaires. Overall, the majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. They agree that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and are helped to have a healthy lifestyle. A small minority disagree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour, takes account of their concerns and is led and managed effectively. Inspectors examined these issues carefully. They found evidence that the school had appropriate systems for managing unacceptable behaviour and that pupils' behaviour was good. Inspectors also found that the school has appropriate strategies for engaging parents and actively seeks their views. However, members of the governing body felt there was a need to review these in light of the concerns raised. A few parents and carers raised concerns about the Year 6 statutory tests. The local authority confirmed that there had been an investigation into the administration of the 2011 tests and, while recommendations had been made, the integrity of the tests had been maintained.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Astbury St Mary's CofE 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 123 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	47	27	46	3	5	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	34	58	23	39	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	42	27	46	5	8	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	41	22	37	7	12	5	8
The teaching is good at this school	28	47	21	36	8	14	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	42	22	37	10	17	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	47	25	42	5	8	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)	26	44	25	42	2	3	3	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	41	23	39	6	10	4	7
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	42	19	32	8	14	6	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	47	16	27	9	15	5	8
The school is led and managed effectively	26	44	16	27	10	17	6	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	54	15	25	10	17	2	3

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



8 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Astbury St Mary's CofE Primary School, Congleton, CW12 4RG

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school recently. You may remember us coming to see how well you are all learning. We learnt a lot from watching your lessons and talking to you about your work and life at school.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. The adults take good care of you. Your well-being is really important to them. There is a strong feeling that you are a family at your school and that your Christian faith is very important. You behave and get along together very well. You are given interesting things to learn about and a range of clubs and activities to join in with. I was very impressed by the way your school helps you to stay healthy and by the contribution that you make to your community and the environment. Well done for getting your green flag!

These are the things we have agreed that your school should improve next.

- Make your lessons better so that pupils in the infants learn more and you all make even better progress.
- Help you to learn and experience more about the diversity in different cultures and communities in the United Kingdom.
- Make sure your headteacher and governors keep a better check on how your school is improving and how well you are doing.

I am sure that you will have some good ideas about how to improve your school. I hope you will contribute them through the school council. Remember, you can all play your part by continuing to work hard and attending school as often as possible. All the inspectors wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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