

Astmoor Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111217
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	378253
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2012
Lead inspector	Jennifer Platt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Lloyd
Headteacher	Louisa Aldridge
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2005
School address	Kingshead Close Castlefields Runcorn WA7 2JE
Telephone number	01928 565053
Fax number	01928 574627
Email address	Head.astmoor@halton.gov.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

Inspection team

Jennifer Platt
David Law

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons and in small groups led by teaching assistants. Every class was observed twice and inspectors observed activities organised for 'Shine Week', which was happening during the inspection. Pupils from different years read to the inspectors. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in their books, with a focus on mathematics and writing in Years 2 and 6. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, and leaders and managers at all levels. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at many documents, including records on safeguarding, attendance, the school's development plan, behaviour logs, and pupils' progress data. A few parents and carers talked informally to inspectors at the start of the day. Inspectors examined questionnaire responses from pupils and staff as well as 48 completed by parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. There are two mixed-age classes in Key Stage 2. Nursery provision is available in the morning. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible to free school meals is high. Virtually all pupils are White British and no pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus is above average, although, currently, no pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the minimum standards expected by the government. There have been considerable staff changes since the last inspection. A breakfast club is provided every day. The school has achieved Eco Bronze Award and Healthy Schools Status and is famous locally for being speedstacking champions and gaining the school award for best support from Halton Haven Hospice.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

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

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because attainment in writing is not as strong as in other subjects and there are a few inconsistencies in teaching and the monitoring of provision. Nevertheless, this is an exceptionally caring school and its popularity with parents and carers is reflected in the rising numbers on roll.
- Achievement is good. From generally very low starting points, children flourish in the very rich environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress from Year 1 to Year 6 is good, being brisker in Key Stage 2. Attainment when pupils leave is broadly average in reading, writing, and mathematics. Attainment in reading is higher than in writing and, in Year 6, there is marked improvement in pupils reaching the higher level. That is not the case in writing for the older pupils and in all subjects by the end of Year 2. In particular, writing is below average in Year 2. The focus on teaching basic literacy skills is successful in lessons, but pupils fail to apply these skills consistently when working independently. In mathematics, not all pupils are confident solving problems.
- Teaching is good. Pupils are engaged fully in learning because teachers make lessons interesting. Resources are good, although access to information and communication technology (ICT) in class is limited. A clear focus on teaching letters and sounds is securing improvement in reading. Teachers do not always use assessment data successfully to ensure a precise match to ability, particularly for the more-able.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning. Behaviour is good and pupils are considerate towards each other. They feel safe and say concerns are handled effectively.
- Senior leaders manage performance and teaching quality effectively. However, the roles of the newly appointed subject leaders and the governing body are not sufficiently developed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all pupils, particularly the more-able, make rapid and sustained progress by:
 - ensuring that in writing pupils apply their punctuation, spelling, and handwriting skills at all times, including when they are working independently
 - ensuring pupils' numeracy skills are consolidated before moving to new learning so that they apply these confidently in calculations and problem solving
 - checking that, in Key Stage 1, the more-able pupils always make as much progress as possible.

- Raise teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring full use is made of assessment information to plan activities which challenge all pupils, particularly the more-able
 - improving the use of ICT in lessons.

- Improve leadership and management by extending the monitoring role of the new subject leaders and governing body.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers agree with inspectors that progress is good. Children start school with skills that are mainly lower than the levels expected for their age. Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, although attainment in reading, writing, and calculation are still below average as children start Year 1. Children reach the expected level in personal development and speaking and listening because these key skills are given priority throughout the day. In lessons, children are eager to learn because every day is full of excitement. Letters and sounds are taught in a structured and practical way and children use their skills well to write their names and label their 'stars' as part of a topic.

Progress from Year 1 to Year 6 is good, being faster in Key Stage 2. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been below average; it is now rising to broadly average in reading and mathematics, but remains stubbornly below average in writing. Pupils enter Year 1 with below-average skills in aspects of numeracy and literacy and many make good progress to reach the level expected for their age by the end of Year 2. However, historically, too few pupils have reached the higher Level 3 and some more-able pupils have not made enough progress. Learning and progress in lessons for Year 1 and 2 are good overall and increasing with consistency in teaching. Pupils enjoyed writing a letter of thanks to visitors during Shine Week. Shine Week is a celebration week for the pupils, including amazing activities such as circus skills, zumba dancing, and golf. Pupils record their ideas well, but books show they fail to apply their literacy skills consistently, especially when working independently.

With small cohorts, results of national tests vary year-on-year, but attainment in reading, writing, and mathematics at the end of Year 6 is average overall. Last year, too few reached the higher Level 5 in reading. The evidence from hearing pupils read and the school's reading records show a marked improvement in reading this year, with the majority in the current Year 6 working at the higher level. Success has been achieved by good progress in lessons, with sessions allocated to all classes for sharing and reviewing a book. The sessions have fired up pupils' enthusiasm for reading. Writing is improving and work is sequenced well and includes imaginative vocabulary, but, as in Key Stage 1, there is a lack of accuracy by some in the application of basic skills. In mathematics, most make good progress in lessons, but, occasionally, pupils move to the next stage before consolidating their skills and this leads to some lack of confidence when solving problems.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress and those who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances often make very good progress and start to learn effectively. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress also.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire felt their children were taught well. Inspectors agree that teaching is good. A particular strength is the patience and perseverance shown to those who need extra help. That ensures pupils feel confident enough to try out new ideas. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children benefit from the skills of experienced staff who make learning enjoyable. The excitement during the build-up to their Jubilee garden party was tangible with the arrival of parcels and great preparation. Outdoor equipment was washed thoroughly, as was the 'royal underwear', amidst giggles and a great deal of splashing.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, careful planning ensures pupils understand the purpose of their activities. Lessons follow a clear sequence and are managed effectively, so that they run smoothly. In most lessons, a variety of activities sustains pupils' interest. In Years 3 and 4, pupils were engaged in learning through the imaginative use of a video clip of Harry Potter and the teacher acting in character as a witch. It was not surprising pupils learned successfully the importance of instructions when mixing potions. Lessons, usually, go at a brisk pace, especially with lively introductions to mathematics lessons. Occasionally, the pace slows when too much time is spent on teachers talking and a few pupils become restless and disturb others. Resources are organised efficiently, so pupils get to work promptly. Pupils describe good use of the ICT suite, but the lack of resources in class prevents skills being developed further in lessons. Marking is informative and older pupils make good use of their targets to improve their work. Teachers use assessment information very well often to match work to different abilities in class. Occasionally, the practice is less effective and the more-able pupils and those who find learning difficult either are not challenged sufficiently or need additional support. Nevertheless, the teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants are effective because they are often trained to meet these pupils' specific needs. They play a leading role also in interventions, especially in reading.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The ethos of the school is warm and friendly. Pupils play a large part in that through their good behaviour and close relationships with each other. Although at break there are few resources to occupy pupils, they play happily and older pupils include younger ones thoughtfully in their activities. Discussions identify that good behaviour is typical, although pupils do recognise a few pupils who are not adept at handling their own behaviour. They are managed effectively by staff. During the inspection pupils behaved very well, as visitors introduced them to different activities as part of Shine Week.

Virtually every pupil, parent, and carer identified that thorough attention is given to safety. Pupils are aware of possible dangers and know how to deal with these, including safe use of the internet. They are polite and respectful to each other and when, on the odd occasion bullying occurs, consider it is dealt with promptly. They have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. Pupils strive hard to fulfil the school's expectations, enjoy school and, as a result, attendance is improving and is now average. The school council felt the following sums up their school; 'a big, happy family that strives to include parents and carers in a unique school'.

Leadership and management

The determined headteacher places the needs of the children firmly at the heart of the school. Pastoral care is outstanding and underpins the very good relationships and good behaviour. All staff support that philosophy, alongside a common drive to raise attainment. More rigorous tracking of performance leads to staff being held accountable for pupils' progress. Underachievement is beginning to be resolved. More success can be seen in the increase in pupils reaching high levels in Year 6 and improvements in reading and mathematics at Key Stage 1. The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor teaching effectively, although a few inconsistencies remain. Nevertheless, monitoring has led to effective professional development, as in the successful support for newly qualified teachers. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have managed literacy and numeracy effectively. To extend leadership to other staff, the role of subject leader has recently been delegated. The new leaders are auditing their subjects, but, as yet, have not had time to develop their monitoring role. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Together with a track record of steady improvement, that indicates good capacity to improve.

The governing body is supportive. It keeps a close watch on finance and safeguarding, which meets requirements fully. It is not involved enough in monitoring to ensure it challenges school decisions fully.

The school promotes equality of opportunity well and harassment is not tolerated. Careful tracking, linked to intervention strategies, has improved provision and outcomes for the more-able in Key Stage 2. The gap is closing for this group of pupils in Key Stage 1, too, but is not yet fully eradicated.

The exciting events of Shine Week reflect the richness of the curriculum. It is well balanced and meets the needs of most pupils. Children in the Early Years Foundation

Stage benefit from good opportunities to learn independently and also with adults. The curriculum promotes spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development very well. A global project shows pupils' appreciation of the holocaust, Fairtrade, and cultural diversity. As one pupil said, 'We may look different, but inside we are all the same'.

The school is proud of links with the community. For example, the close partnership with Runcorn Fire Station has two-fold benefits. Pupils visit the fire station and hold a stall at their open day and fire-fighters visit school and promote fire safety. Parents and carers feel well informed and were virtually unanimous that they would recommend the school to others.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Astmoor Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 2JE

Thank you so much for the friendly welcome you gave the inspectors when we came to your school. It gave us great pleasure to share the excitement of Shine Week and to see how well behaved you were when trying out so many new activities. It was a delight to share your views of the school and we agree you go to a good and caring school. We are pleased that you feel safe. The inspectors were very impressed by your good progress and your books show how much work you complete in school. You are taught well and, although we saw only a few lessons, we can tell from the work in your books you do many interesting activities. We think there are some changes that the school can make to improve your progress even more and these are:

- to ensure you all make as much progress as possible, especially in writing and mathematics
- to check that the work you are given is just at the right level, not too easy for those who find learning easy and not too difficult for others
- to provide more computers in class for you
- to check that all leaders play a part in checking that you all do as well as possible.

You will all leave your school with many amazing memories and we know how much you appreciate all that is provided for you. We are confident you will continue to play your part by attending regularly and listening closely to your teachers. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Platt
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.