

Alma Primary School

Alma Road, Ponders End, Enfield, EN3 4UQ

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because pupils' progress varies from Year 1 through the school and pupils do not reach the standards of which they are capable by Year 6.
- Teaching has not been challenging enough over time to ensure that pupils consistently make good progress. Teachers' expectations are not pitched at the right level and the work is too easy. Teachers do not ask pupils questions that are challenging enough to make them think hard.
- In some lessons, teachers spend too much time giving explanations and talking to the whole class. Pupils spend too long listening to teachers, rather than getting on with their work. As a result, pupils' progress is slowed.
- There are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to use and apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, do not set ambitious enough pupil achievement targets. This results in pupils across the school not making good or better progress.
- Leaders do not monitor and analyse information frequently enough on how pupils are progressing. Consequently, opportunities are missed to identify where pupils need extra help to make good or better progress, so that they can reach the highest standards.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has rapidly focused on improving teaching. She has identified the key areas for improvement and has established a robust programme of training and development. This is beginning to address pupils' previous underachievement.
- Children settle in well and make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Smiles and laughter are everywhere and children find that learning is fun.
- The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well so that pupils from a range of backgrounds and cultures learn and play well together harmoniously.
- Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They and their parents and carers say that they are happy, enjoy school and feel safe.
- The school is a bright and stimulating environment where pupils' work is celebrated. The artwork is particularly imaginative and

attractive.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 16 teachers. These observations included the teaching of phonics (letter patterns and the sounds they make). Many of these observations were made jointly with the headteacher and senior leaders of the school.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other members, a representative of the local authority, parents and carers, staff, including senior and middle leaders and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including teachers' planning, the school's self-evaluation and development plans, assessment information, monitoring files, governing body minutes, external reports, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked with them about their enjoyment of books.
- Inspectors considered the 15 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Beverley Perin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Stumpf	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector
Derek Watts	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is more than twice the average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, with the largest group being of Turkish heritage. Almost three quarters of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average. Most of this group has speech, language and communication needs or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at other than the usual times is higher than that found nationally.
- The school's governing body manages a daily breakfast club, which was part of this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2012. Many members of the school's senior and middle leadership teams and several members of the governing body, including the Chair, took up their posts between September and December 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better to enable pupils to make at least good progress by:
 - increasing teachers' expectations of what all pupils can achieve and ensuring that the work is set at the right level of difficulty for every pupil's needs
 - making sure that teachers do not talk for too long and that pupils are given ample opportunity to get on with their work
 - ensuring that all teachers ask more open-ended questions that make pupils think hard and give longer answers.
- Raise attainment in English and mathematics so that it is at least in line with the national average by the end of Year 6 by:
 - planning opportunities for pupils to extend and practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that higher pupil achievement targets are set across the school that will result in good progress for all
 - checking pupils' progress more frequently to identify where extra help is needed to make sure that all pupils make their best progress and reach the highest standards.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, over time, pupils make inconsistent progress through the school and standards in English and mathematics are below those expected at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Evidence during the inspection, including pupils' work, learning in lessons and the school's current information on how well pupils are doing, confirms that rates of progress are beginning to increase and pupils are now making the progress expected of them from their starting points.
- Pupils make adequate progress in their reading. The proportion of pupils passing the phonic-screening check was just below average and represented good progress last year from pupils' low starting points. Pupils' levels in reading are well below national standards because of past underachievement. Pupils across the school enjoy reading, but they are not confident enough to talk about different authors. Many pupils do not read at home, although the school actively encourages this.
- Writing has recently been given a high priority in the school; however, standards remain low over time and pupils lack opportunities for practising writing across all subjects. There are, however, signs of improvement, as seen in examples of pupils' writing, such as the vivid and well-structured descriptions of *Oliver Twist* produced by Year 5.
- Most pupils make the progress expected of them in mathematics over time. Standards are low, but improving. Inspectors saw pupils working hard to solve difficult problems, such as working out the new quantities of ingredients to be used in a recipe, applying their knowledge of fractions and proportions to produce larger and smaller amounts.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those expected for their age. As a result of effective teaching and a range of exciting activities in a caring environment, children make good progress. Nonetheless, they do not close the gaps with other children nationally and their attainment is below average when they move on to Year 1.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and the majority of pupils who join and leave the school other than at the usual time make similar adequate progress to their peers. This is because they benefit from one-to-one or small group teaching. Some pupils of Turkish heritage are receiving additional support to help them catch up with other pupils, especially in reading.
- The high proportion of pupils funded through the pupil premium, as reassured by their average point scores at the end of Year 6, reach similar standards to their classmates in mathematics, but they are about six months behind in English. The school now properly checks the impact of funding received. However, the gaps with all pupils nationally are not closing rapidly enough.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching is improving, it is still too variable across the school and requires further improvement to become consistently good. In too many lessons teachers do not set challenging work and pupils do not reach the highest levels. Teachers do not ask questions that encourage pupils to think hard enough.
- Many teachers spend too long giving explanations to the whole class. As a result, pupils' learning and progress slows down. For instance, in one class, pupils became restless waiting on the carpet while the teacher explained to them all how to add multiples of ten to solve real-life problems.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching is good. There is a strong emphasis on personal development that helps children make rapid development in their social skills and behave well. Adults provide a range of creative and engaging activities inside and outside the classroom and, as a result, children make good progress. For example, when children were taken to see the school chickens, the teacher skilfully used a range of questions to help them use new describing

words and expressions and encouraged children to give longer answers.

- Class routines are established and pupils settle quickly to their work. Learning environments are stimulating and exciting. Pupils enjoy working together and the school has developed the use of 'talk partners' to encourage them to reflect on their learning and, at the same time, improve their speaking skills, such as when pupils explained their answers to each other, when learning to divide in mathematics.
- Teachers mark work regularly so that pupils know how well they are doing and their next steps for improvement. Increasingly, pupils are encouraged to respond to their teacher's comments, which help them to improve their work.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are strong and, in the best lessons, pupils are given challenging and interesting work that helps them to make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically good. Pupils are polite, welcoming and friendly and are keen to engage in conversation with visitors and adults.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and work together enthusiastically. When learning slows and pupils spend too long listening to the teacher, they occasionally get fidgety. They are, however, quick to respond to their teachers and other adults and swiftly return their attention to work.
- There are few instances of bullying and, where this does occur, the school deals with it promptly and effectively. Pupils understand and explain different kinds of bullying. They express intolerance of racist bullying and support pupils who join the school other than at the usual times.
- Pupils are confident that there are adults to talk to if they have anxieties and value the support available to them in the 'Place 2be' where pupils say 'they teach us self-confidence'. They feel safe, are given effective guidance by teachers on how to keep themselves safe outside the school and know how to use the internet safely.
- Pupils are positive about their enjoyment of school and appreciate the changes that their new headteacher has introduced, such as the new rewards system and the 'special lunch'. Pupils are particularly keen on the newly erected stage in the playground, where they dance and sing at breaks and lunchtimes, having negotiated the choice of music together.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because a few instances of misbehaviour do occur and this slows learning.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Accurate self-evaluation has enabled the new headteacher and governing body to recognise that the school requires improvement. Currently, the school does not set high enough targets for securing pupils' good progress. Leaders do not check and analyse information on how well pupils are doing frequently enough and, as a result, some opportunities are missed to identify where pupils do not make enough progress.
- The local authority has not provided sufficient support or challenge to this school to secure consistently good quality teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher and governing body have implemented systems for setting targets for teachers to improve their work, but these are not yet embedded to hold staff fully to account for pupils' progress.
- The headteacher has ensured that all leaders are focused on improving the quality of teaching. Members of staff benefit from targeted professional development that is linked to whole-school priorities, such as improving standards in pupils' writing. This has begun to result in improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' work.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements, but does not yet promote good achievement in English and mathematics, as there are insufficient opportunities across the subjects for pupils to practise and apply their literacy and numeracy skills.
 - There is a wide range of visits, such as to the Houses of Parliament and Kew Gardens. The pupils particularly appreciate these and the extra activities on offer, such as the breakfast, film, and football clubs. The subjects that pupils learn promote positive attitudes, such as valuing other people's faiths and beliefs, and support pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed and determined to bring about improvements needed in pupils' achievement and teaching. They are undertaking a programme of training so that they can better challenge and support senior leaders with the necessary rigour. Recent minutes of meetings reflect that governors are involved in holding the school to account in relation to setting targets for staff and rewarding good teaching. Governors are aware of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses, but are unsure of the impact of the pupil premium funding. Strong actions have been put in place to monitor the school's work. Governors ensure that safeguarding is in place and that the school is committed to equality of opportunity; there is zero tolerance of discrimination.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102012
Local authority	Enfield
Inspection number	404799

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	514
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David McLean
Headteacher	Helen Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2011
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