



Alsager Highfields Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111032
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 278577
Inspection dates 21 November 2005 to 22 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Arthur Markham CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Fairview Avenue
School category	Community		Alsager
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 2NW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01270 882 472
Number on roll	262	Fax number	01270 882 472
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr D Spall
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr J Girbow

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 21 November 2005 - 22 November 2005	Inspection number 278577
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Alsager Highfields Primary is an average sized school situated near the centre of Alsager, Cheshire. The vast majority of children are of white British backgrounds with only a small number from minority ethnic groups. One child is at an early stage of learning English. The number entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The children's skills on entry to the school are below the levels expected. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Award and Artsmark Gold Award and is recognised as a Healthy School.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The inspectors find that the school is modest in judging its effectiveness as only good. The school has recognised that it now needs to develop further its self-evaluation procedures to strengthen its awareness of how well it is doing. The school is extremely well led and managed. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Close attention is given to English, mathematics and science and the standards achieved by children are high, but careful attention is also given to ensuring that pupils' skills are developed across the whole curriculum, with particular emphasis being given to creativity. Pupils consequently enjoy their learning, work hard and make very good progress.

Children make very good progress year on year. Their attitudes to learning and behaviour are good. They are cared for well and, as a result, feel secure and happy. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. A high emphasis is given to ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met. They are set individual targets for improvement, but their progress towards them is not regularly monitored. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with particular gifts or talents are supported well. Parents and pupils hold the school in high regard. The high level performance found at the last inspection has been maintained and the school is well placed to improve further. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to build on its many strengths and improve standards further, the school should:

- further develop and organise the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school
- improve target setting procedures for individual pupils so that they are fully aware of what they must do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children's attainment on entry to the Reception class is below average overall. They make outstanding progress and reach very high standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils' performance in the national tests at Year 6 has been significantly above average in three of the last four years.

Children make a good start to their learning in the Reception class and most reach the standards expected by the time they enter Year 1. In Years 1 and 2 pupils continue to make good progress. As a result of high quality teaching, pupils' progress accelerates in Years 3 to 6 and they reach very high standards. The action taken by the school to improve performance after the dip in performance in mathematics and science in 2004 was highly successful and the unvalidated 2005 results show a dramatic improvement.

Close attention is given to meeting the needs of all pupils. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress because their individual needs are identified and they are given very effective support. Similarly, those pupils who are gifted or talented are suitably challenged so that they achieve very well. Pupils develop good skills in using computers, which they use well to help them learn in other subjects. Virtually all pupils successfully achieve the challenging targets they are set.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as are their attendance levels. Throughout the school high quality displays of pupils' work celebrate the richness of life. Opportunities for older pupils to consider what to place in their 'treasure box', or for younger ones to add to their 'kindness tree' help them to reflect on their own opinions and actions. Links with a school in Namibia develop pupils' awareness of other cultures. The very good relationships that pervade the school prove that pupils translate their thinking into practice. They collaborate well in lessons and are supportive of each other.

Pupils are self-confident and carry out responsibilities well, proudly explaining, for example, how the school council has influenced developments or how play leaders help those who are feeling lonely. They enthusiastically enjoy lessons and good numbers participate in after school activities. Pupils generally behave well, although their movement to and from assemblies can be somewhat disorderly and they do not always take care of growing plants when playing. They are well aware of how to live healthily and behave in a safe manner. They are generous fundraisers and helpful to visitors. Their positive attitudes and high level basic skills equip them well for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The commitment to meeting the specific needs of each pupil, and the consistent approach to supporting pupils' learning shown by all adults, are major reasons why teaching and learning are exceptionally good. All adults are particularly good at intervening to prompt or question pupils to extend their learning so that their gains in skills and knowledge are very good.

The creative use of all subjects to extend learning opportunities in literacy and numeracy ensures that pupils are provided with especially challenging and stimulating learning experiences. The very good relationships ensure that pupils respond very well to adults who know that they want to succeed. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good. Warm relationships and practical activities ensure children settle well and make a very good start to their education.

The quality and use of assessment is good. Formal assessment systems give information about how well each pupil is progressing. Parents appreciate the school's commitment

to involve them in their children's learning and being given details of pupils' targets. However, many pupils are not clear what their specific targets are and they need to be more involved in knowing what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent. It is rich, relevant and interesting. The school's commitment to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is at the heart of its success and the curriculum is designed to do this particularly well.

The innovative approach to topics, using a book title as the central theme, enables other subjects to be studied well. An excellent range of visitors to the school and visits to places of interest provide learning relevant to the pupils' own knowledge or experiences. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in three residential visits.

Information and communication technology is an integral part of work in all subjects and computers in classrooms are used well. The Foundation Stage curriculum covers all the required areas of learning. Planning is effectively based on the point in their learning that pupils have reached.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents, pupils and inspectors agree that the school provides good quality care, guidance and support for pupils. Staff listen well to pupils on an individual basis and offer increasing opportunities for them to voice their concerns. The helpfulness of staff was the first reason given by pupils to explain their judgement that this is a very good school. Child protection arrangements are very good and are followed rigorously. Procedures relating to health and safety are generally good, particularly governors' active involvement, but some areas need further risk assessment. For example, although great care is taken to ensure that the gate to the public footpath is securely locked, no risk assessment has been carried out.

Pupils are set individual targets for improvement, usually in English and mathematics, however, the use made of these is variable. Some pupils know what the next steps are but others are not clear precisely what they need to do next in order to improve their work. Such knowledge would increase their potential to become independent learners.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's strong and effective leadership gives a very clear educational direction to the school. He is well supported by the deputy headteacher and senior staff who share his commitment to providing high quality education for all pupils. This high quality leadership has successfully

developed a strong team approach with a commitment to improvement and this has enabled the high level performance found at the last inspection to be maintained.

The school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas requiring attention. Further development of the school's self-evaluation procedures has rightly been identified for attention. Pupils' performance is closely monitored and information is used effectively to ensure that the needs of all pupils are identified. For example, after the dip in pupils' performance in the 2004 national tests, the school quickly identified the reason and took very effective action to address the issue. As a result the standards achieved by pupils in the 2005 tests improved markedly. The views of pupils and parents are sought in order to inform strategic planning and teachers' performance management targets are linked to priorities in the school improvement plan, which ensures that the whole school works together effectively to make changes. Finances are well managed and the school is very well resourced.

Governors are actively involved in the life of the school and meet all their legal requirements. They have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide effective challenge and support to the headteacher and staff.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, three inspectors recently visited your school to find out how well your teachers are helping you with your learning. We enjoyed our visit and would like to thank you for being so friendly and talking to us. It was really interesting to listen to what you had to say. We are pleased to say that we decided that you have an outstanding school. The things that we particularly liked were:

- the way your headteacher runs the school. He listens to what you all think could make it better and works hard to make the changes happen
- the way all the staff take good care of you and help you to learn so well
- your good behaviour in lessons and around the school and the way you help each other
- the way you work hard for your teachers and take a pride in your work.

We have asked your teachers to improve two things to make your school even better. We want them to:

- make sure that they closely examine all aspects of the work of the school to see where it could be made even better
- make sure that you all know your targets and regularly check how well you are doing, so that you are fully aware of what you need to do to improve.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We all hope that you will continue to work hard and help the teachers so that Alsager Highfields becomes an even better school.