



Excalibur Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111038
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 278579
Inspection dates 21 November 2005 to 22 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Frank Ravey CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ivy Lane
School category	Community		Alsager
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 2RQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01270 872825
Number on roll	199	Fax number	01270 872825
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs T Cushing
Date of previous inspection	13 September 1999	Headteacher	Mr D Watson

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 21 November 2005 - 22 November 2005	Inspection number 278579
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© 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 a team of two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of broadly average size and takes nearly half its pupils from outside the local area. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few are learning English as an additional language. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school houses a pre-school group and a 'before and after school' group. Both are privately run. The school has met the requirements of the Healthy Schools' award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges its overall effectiveness to be good. Inspectors agree - and add that it also has outstanding features. It provides good value for money. The school has many strengths. Pupils make good progress overall to reach standards that are significantly above average by the time they finish Year 6 and are exceptionally high in English and science. Progress is good in English and science although in mathematics it is satisfactory. Pupils' personal development and many aspects of the care provided for them are outstanding. Teaching is good and leads very largely to good achievement. Relationships throughout the school are outstanding. The school provides a rich and stimulating curriculum, supplemented by learning resources of at least good quality. It takes heed of the views of parents and pupils. Its leadership and management are good and its evaluation of performance is accurate. Standards in the Foundation Stage are above average and the quality of education provided in this stage of learning is good. The good quality of its leadership and the strengths in teaching, learning and pupils' performance emerging from this have enabled the school to make good improvement since its last inspection. It is well placed to continue improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics to match those in English and science by further developing teachers' subject skills.
- Continue to implement the programme for supporting pupils who need extra help.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When pupils start school their standards of attainment vary but overall they are above average. By the time they leave Year 6 standards overall are significantly above average. This represents good progress. Standards have risen significantly since the previous inspection and at a faster rate than nationally. Provisional test data for 2005 indicates that they are now at their highest level for six years. A strong indicator of good progress is that standards for recent cohorts of pupils at the end of Year 6 are significantly further above national averages than they were at the start of Year 3. Standards are exceptionally high in English and science, having risen significantly from 2004. All groups of pupils achieve well overall, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The very few pupils who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language and looked-after children make outstanding progress.

Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage. By the time they reach Year 1, standards are still within the above average range but have risen across all areas of learning. Progress is good in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 and in English and science at Key Stage 2. Progress in writing is particularly strong at Key Stage 2, with boys' performance recently being outstanding. This good progress enables pupils to achieve standards in English and science that are exceptionally high when they leave Year 6. In mathematics, progress is satisfactory in both key stages and pupils leave

Year 6 with standards that are above average. Whilst achievement in mathematics is satisfactory, lower attainers especially do not achieve as highly as they should although the school's programme for improvement is beginning to address this issue successfully. The school sets challenging targets for its Year 6 pupils to achieve and mostly they are successful in reaching these.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has maintained the outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development that was reported by the previous inspection. The way in which it promotes pupils' social development is exceptionally strong. It has the highest expectations of pupils' response to its provision. Pupils' response in lessons, around the school and especially in the dining room and in using the excellent outdoor play facilities is outstanding. Their behaviour and attitudes to work are exemplary. They are polite and easily engage in conversation. They show great respect for each other. Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility and to use their initiative. They respond very well. They talk very sensitively of how they try to care for others in their roles as Class Representatives or Peer Counsellors trained to support others who may have problems. The school is very successful in helping pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles and safe practices and to develop as responsible citizens. Pupils welcome the healthy choices provided at lunchtime and show a strong sense of awareness through their own fund-raising initiatives of the needs of others. Their liking for school is demonstrated by the above average levels of attendance sustained in recent years.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good across the school and very largely meets the learning needs of all groups of pupils. It is well planned, expectations are high and the work is mostly challenging for all pupils although in mathematics until recently work has not challenged lower attaining pupils sufficiently well. Teachers and support staff work together very well. This is particularly effective in helping pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress but is also effective with higher attaining pupils. Outstanding teaching in English and science promotes high standards. Although teaching in mathematics has been less effective in so doing, the school recognises this. Several strategies are now improving learning and helping pupils, especially lower attainers, to make increased progress in lessons. Opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) to support achievement in other subjects are taken well. This is particularly notable in mathematics.

Staff know pupils' academic performance well because of strong assessment procedures and this also means that weaknesses in learning are quickly identified and where

necessary, effective classroom support given. Work is marked conscientiously and pupils are given good suggestions to help them improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good in the Foundation Stage and across Years 1 to 6. It meets learners' needs well and is enriched by many educational visits and visitors. For example, an appealing presentation of work about Henry VIII by trainee teachers included a drama activity where Year 5 pupils tried to 'free' one of Henry's six wives and save her life. A recent visit by an African artist and storyteller enriched both the curriculum and pupils' cultural awareness. A good range of extra-curricular activities add to the curriculum. Specialist external teachers enhance provision for music and physical education. Pupils are given good opportunities to think about the world of work. A strong programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) contributes well to pupils' health and well-being. Parents are rightly pleased about the chances their children have to develop self-confidence and also to learn about the importance of co-operation with others. The curriculum meets statutory requirements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school judges this area to be outstanding. Whilst inspectors agree that a very high standard of care is provided for pupils they find that some aspects of staff training are not sufficiently up-to-date. As a result, they judge provision to be good with outstanding features. Not only does the school care very well for its pupils and provide them with a safe and stimulating environment in which to learn, it also encourages them very effectively to show the same high standard of care for each other. Excellent relationships underpin this success. Very good analysis of test information is used well to help pupils improve standards. Good arrangements are made to safeguard pupils. Staff are vigilant in monitoring pupils' safety and are highly successful in promoting their personal development. Throughout the school, the atmosphere is calm, orderly and very positive; and this results in happy, confident learners who achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with some outstanding aspects. The headteacher, with the strong support of a good senior management team and committed governing body, ensures that there is clear and effective commitment to improvement. This is achieved through rigorous management of the staff's work and the involvement of all staff. The headteacher's commitment to team work is outstanding and increasingly very successful. These factors are the foundation for the school's success in raising academic standards and in promoting pupils' personal development. Its self-evaluation is accurate and this enables it to develop appropriate strategies for improvement and to ensure good and improving standards of teaching and learning. Equality of

opportunity is promoted successfully so that learners mostly achieve well. Parents and pupils are consulted regularly and their views heeded as much as possible. Pupils' views are obtained very effectively through regular meetings of Class Representatives.

The governing body makes a strong contribution to the school's success. For example, governors keep a close watch over its work by fulfilling their designated curricular and other responsibilities and they have led significant developments in PSHCE. Leaders and managers at all levels realise achievement in mathematics is an issue for improvement and strategies to promote this are being implemented successfully. The school's record of success in raising standards and in identifying weaknesses and taking effective steps to eradicate them means that it has a good capacity to make further improvement.

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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	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?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	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	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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

It was a pleasure to meet with you during your school's recent inspection and to listen to you express your views so well. Mr Hussain and I really enjoyed our two days at the school and we will always remember the great welcome everyone gave us.

We found many things to like and admire about your school. Here are some of the main ones!

- The excellent behaviour of all the children and the outstanding way you all work so hard.
- The brilliant way you care for each other and how polite and happy you are.
- The hard work of your teachers and teaching assistants and how it helps you to do well, especially in English and science.
- The outstanding way in which your headteacher makes sure everyone who works at your school feels an equal part of the staff team.
- The very good care everyone takes of you.

There is not a great deal that we think needs to be done better but we have asked your headteacher and teachers to work with you to raise standards further in mathematics to the same good levels of those in English and science. Of course, they have already made a successful start in doing this, especially through the interesting mathematics work you are doing on computers.

Congratulations on a successful inspection and all the very best for the future!