



# Astmoor Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111217  
**LEA** Halton  
**Inspection number** 278622  
**Inspection dates** 27 September 2005 to 28 September 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Frank Carruthers CfBT Lead Inspector

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Kingshead Close
<b>School category</b>	Community		Castlefields
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2JE
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01928 565053
<b>Number on roll</b>	137	<b>Fax number</b>	01928 574627
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs K Tudor
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr K Rimmer

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 27 September 2005 - 28 September 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 278622
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school is located in an area of significant social disadvantage in Runcorn. The school shares its site with a Lifelong Learning Centre and private nursery. Almost all pupils are White-British with a small proportion from mixed White and Black African or Caribbean families. The mobility of pupils is above average. There are very few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average and there are a small number of pupils who are being looked after in public care. The attainment of most children on entry to the mixed nursery and reception class is well below that expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above the average for a school of this type and there are four pupils with a statement of special educational need. Most classes are organised in distinct age groups. The school has formed a number of partnerships with different groups of schools, such as The East Runcorn Education Action Zone and The Excellence in Halton Project. It has strong links with its associated high school and is part of The Primary National Strategy's Intensive Support Programme. It has achieved the ArtsMark and is currently working towards the Healthy Schools certificate.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The school judged its effectiveness to be good. While the school's success in promoting the personal development of pupils is clearly good, pupils' achievement overall is only satisfactory. Standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average in Year 6 but have varied across different year groups in recent years, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Standards in Year 2 are low and have declined in recent years. The school has identified this is a key aspect for improvement.

Strengths of the school include its recent involvement in projects and partnerships designed to evaluate how well the school is doing and to eliminate weaknesses in teaching. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good and the children achieve well. The pupils' personal development is good and some aspects, such as their awareness of safety and healthy lifestyles, are exceptionally good. The school has good systems of care, support and guidance to promote the children's well-being, especially for pupils with learning difficulties and those who are looked after in public care.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Progress on most of the key issues which arose from the last inspection has been good, but pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science has not shown significant improvement and remains a key aspect for improvement. Leadership and management of the school is satisfactory overall, as is the quality of the school's self-evaluation. The governors' awareness of the school's performance is not as robust as it should be. The cost of educating a pupil at the school is above average but, given its effectiveness, the school provides satisfactory value for money. The school has good capacity to improve.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement and raise standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science by increasing the pace of learning in Years 2, 3 and 4.
- Develop the governors' awareness of statistical information about the performance of the school and improve their links with subjects and teachers.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory and this judgement confirms statistical information about the school and the school's own evaluation. However, pupils' progress is not uniform across the school. Children in the mixed nursery and reception class get off to a good start and make good progress, thanks to the good quality of teaching. The children do particularly well in their personal and physical development. Despite this, by the end of the reception year, most children have not reached all the early learning goals and standards overall are below levels expected of children of this age.

Results of assessments in Year 2 in recent years show that standards have declined in reading, writing and mathematics and are low. With recent improvements to teaching, achieved through better monitoring and assessment procedures, the pace of learning is beginning to improve, especially where teaching is good in Year 1. A key aspect is to increase the pace of learning in Year 2 if pupils' overall achievement by Year 2 is to improve.

Progress from Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall. It is good in the mixed Years 5 and 6 class thanks to good teaching. Progress in Years 3 and 4 has not been good enough in recent times but is showing the early signs of improvement. These are the result of recent improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Standards are broadly average in Year 6, though they vary according to the nature of the small sized year groups. Standards in basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), are broadly average. The school is generally successful at meeting the targets it sets for pupils in Year 6. Recent work to improve low scores in mathematics in national tests has borne fruit and, in the 2005 tests, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 reaching the expected Level 4 and above was better than the national average.

Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are looked after make similar progress to other pupils. Some achieve better than this, successfully meeting the targets in their individual education plans and are consequently removed from the school's list of pupils needing support. The very few pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress and are soon working steadily alongside their classmates. Boys' achievement follows the national picture and the standards they reach are generally below those of girls.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils like coming to school and enjoy school life, as is evident from discussions with pupils, their conduct in school and involvement in activities outside lessons. Levels of attendance are broadly in line with the national average and have shown sustained improvement since 2001. The school successfully encourages effective relationships and social responsibility. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. This judgement confirms the school's view and that of parents. A key element of the school's ethos is respect and care for others and pupils demonstrate this very well. Behaviour is generally good, though a few pupils with a short attention span are easily distracted in lessons and require careful management. Pupils are generally mature and responsible. Their pride in their school is reflected in safe, careful treatment of resources and facilities. There have been no permanent exclusions and very few short term ones.

The school successfully builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. It helps them to develop satisfactory basic skills for their future. Most pupils benefit from working independently and co-operatively. Clear school and class rules also support pupils' personal development very well as do frequent references to good relationships, health, and effective learning. The pupils' awareness of personal safety and that of others and of healthy living is exceptionally good. The long established school council has

contributed significantly to the school's safety and security and takes a full part in airing the views of all pupils.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The school judges teaching and learning to be good. Inspectors judge them to be adequate overall. There is good teaching in the mixed nursery and reception class, in Year 1 and the mixed Years 5 and 6 class. Teaching and learning in Years 2, 3 and 4 in the recent past have not enabled all pupils to make the progress that they should have done. With recent changes and improvements through more rigorous monitoring of teaching, there are the early signs of better learning in lessons. There is good capacity to improve. Outstanding teaching was observed in the mixed Years 5 and 6 classes. Here, in a lesson about Charles Darwin, a great variety of ICT resources and books were well matched to the different ways in which pupils learn. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge, so pupils gain adequate skills and knowledge. Teachers manage classes firmly, making good use of teaching assistants who support pupils with learning difficulties well.

Relationships with pupils are largely positive, resulting in productive learning. Sanctions are sensitively applied when, occasionally, pupils become restless or inattentive. Most lessons are challenging, although in a minority, tasks are similar for all pupils and consequently less demanding.

Teachers usually explain lesson aims and objectives and review progress carefully, using interactive whiteboards well. Many lessons are presented in a lively, engaging manner, which promote good pace and outcomes. The pace of progress flags in a few lessons and so a minority of pupils become restless and learn less.

Teachers assess their pupils' work continuously, adding to their good personal knowledge of them. Most have very recently adapted well to innovative, detailed and accurate methods of tracking and analysing pupils' progress and attainment. The diagnosis of pupils with learning difficulties is carried out early and pupils are then targeted with effective support. In some classes, pupils evaluate their own and their classmates' work. Many benefit from this, although this opportunity is not evident in all classes.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is well planned and meets the needs of all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and the very few learning English as an additional language are catered for well. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception years is good. Lessons in English and mathematics are planned thoroughly and recent initiatives, such as an opportunity for pupils to write at greater length every fortnight, are

beginning to promote important basic skills. The curriculum for ICT is significantly better than at the time of the last inspection and now covers all aspects well.

The curriculum for art and design is particularly rich and this is immediately apparent in the high quality of the display of pupils' work. The well-planned programme of lessons in personal, social and health education successfully helps pupils to learn about health and safety. Lessons about citizenship have also helped older pupils, in particular, to find out more about British society and how the country is governed. All pupils in Years 3 to 6 benefit from learning a modern foreign language and a second language has been introduced for pupils in Year 6. This is the result of good links with the associated high school. There is a good range of activities outside lessons for pupils to enjoy. Visits by artists, musicians and poets and regular visits out of school stimulate pupils' learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Very good, trusting relationships between staff and pupils result in a happy atmosphere in school, which gives pupils confidence in their abilities. The well-informed school council said that pupils confidently take concerns to teachers or other adults in school. They are very keen to ensure the safety of 'small children in school' and they know that taking illegal drugs is 'lethal'. They comment that issues such as bereavement are shared well and teachers support pupils at such times. Staff know pupils very well and understand their individual needs. This complements the increasingly effective methods of targeting and charting pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers use praise effectively and pupils with learning difficulties receive good support and guidance.

The school is very sensitive to the needs of vulnerable pupils and is flexible in its arrangements to support them and their families. There are very good systems to help pupils who arrive in school to settle in, helping them to adjust quickly and gain confidence, all of which greatly helps their achievement. The school has clear, detailed and effective policies and procedures for health and safety and child protection, which are known by all staff. There are regular inspections of the school premises, risk assessments for all eventualities, and specialists are used well as and when required.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior managers and governors are strongly committed to providing the best opportunities for all pupils, whatever there needs, and they set about dealing with the key issues arising from the last inspection well. However, they have yet to make a major impact on raising pupils' achievement so that all pupils achieve well. This is the most important thing for the school to do next. It is the main reason why inspectors disagree with the school's view of leadership and management as being good and judge them to be to be satisfactory.

Inspectors agree, however, with the school's view that the school is in a good position to improve. This is thanks to several important developments in recent years. For

example, the school's involvement in school self evaluation through the Intensifying Support Programme has been successful in identifying aspects of teaching and learning that need to be improved. The deputy headteacher provides particularly effective support to the work of the headteacher and class teachers. Her close analysis of assessment information and introduction of techniques are starting to remedy weaknesses in teaching. The impact of this work is reflected, for instance, in improvements to standards in mathematics but it is too early to assess its impact on pupils' achievement overall.

Governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily and take a full part in school development planning, budget setting and health and safety audits. They have yet to make good use of statistical information on the performance of the school and as a result do not have a detailed grasp of how well the school is performing. Apart from in English and mathematics, there are no formal links between governors and teachers or subjects, which would enable them to better judge the quality of provision. Parents value the work of the school highly but they have little say in the school's development and some commented to inspectors that they would appreciate this opportunity.



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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	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	3	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	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	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school and please pass on our thanks to the other children we met and spoke to while we were at school. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now we want to share with you what we thought about your school.

There are lots of things in your school that are good. For instance,

- Your teachers are doing a good job taking care of you and helping you all to be safe and healthy.
- Your behaviour is good and you are all growing into sensible students who want to learn and find out.
- You are doing particularly well in art and design and we loved seeing the displays of your work around school.
- Your teachers provide you with good opportunities to learn about living in a healthy, safe way as well as the chance to enjoy activities and clubs after school.

There are some important things for your headteacher, teachers and school governors to do to make the school even better:

- You are not all doing as well as you might in reading, writing, mathematics and science and we want your teachers to get the best out of you. You'll need these important skills when you transfer to secondary school. So we're suggesting ways for them to do this.
- We want your school's governors to get more involved in seeing how you are doing and what lessons are like.

We send our best wishes to you all for the future. Work hard and enjoy school!