

Alexander First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109884
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	288520
Inspection dates	7–8 June 2007
Reporting inspector	John Collins

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Adcock
Headteacher	Ms N K Summerfield
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001
School address	Kenneally Oakley Green Windsor SL4 4XP
Telephone number	01753 852894
Fax number	01753 620795

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average first school is situated in an area of mixed civilian and army housing. The vast majority of pupils are of White British and service background. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties, including those with statements of special educational needs, is below average, as is that of pupils eligible for free school meals. The numbers of pupils who leave and join the school at times other than normal is very high. Classes are of mixed year groups. There is a full time Nursery attached to the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school. One parent wrote that 'we will miss having children at this school'. The school has successfully tackled the issues from its last inspection. As a result, standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement, from their starting points, is good. Previous issues over planning and provision in the Foundation Stage have been addressed successfully and the quality of teaching and learning is now good. In addition, all subjects are now secure in their planning and resources in information and communication technology (ICT) are now beginning to impact positively on pupils' learning in other subjects.

Pupils' attainment on entry to the Nursery is low. Many lack skills in language, communication and social development. Good teaching and provision helps children get a good start, and the expected standards are achieved by most children by the end of the Foundation Stage. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and standards are broadly average. The leadership team have worked well with staff to increase the proportion of good lessons, which means that the rate of progress made by pupils is improving. Current assessment and targets for Year 2 indicate that the trend of rising standards and improved achievement over the past three years has been maintained. While standards are now broadly average, the school recognises that more remains to be done to ensure that they continue to rise, particularly in writing and mathematics.

The very high numbers of pupils who start and leave the school at times other than normal is a significant challenge to the school in preparing pupils for learning. Pupils have responded well to teachers' raised expectations of behaviour, and attitudes to learning are now good. Behaviour is very well managed and the great majority of pupils respond positively to the challenges their teachers give them. They work and concentrate well and their good behaviour contributes to purposeful and productive lessons. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. For example, they have an excellent understanding of healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy their time in school and benefit from a good curriculum that offers a wide range of opportunities.

The school has faced significant staffing challenges recently due to long-term absences and changes in senior staff. Leadership and management, led by the headteacher and deputy, are now much more closely focused on improving pupils' achievement and raising standards. A new management system is becoming more effective and starting to have a positive impact on the work of the school. Teaching has improved and tracking systems are being used effectively to monitor the progress of pupils. However, more use should be made of information from these assessments to ensure that individuals and small groups of pupils get the support they need. Taking account of the new management teams' accurate view of the school's performance, their success in tackling weaknesses, rising standards and pupils' good achievement, there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for the more able, by increasing the opportunities for pupils to write more creatively and imaginatively in other subjects.
- Provide more opportunities for all pupils to use their mathematical and ICT skills across the whole curriculum.
- Make better use of assessment information to target more closely support for pupils' academic achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards currently are average and achievement is good. Most pupils enter the school with low skills but settle down well in the Foundation Stage and make good progress. The emphasis put on developing speaking and listening skills, particularly over the last year has had a positive impact on reading standards, which are above average. Standards in writing by the end of Year 2 in 2006 were lower than previous years but were still average. Standards in mathematics were also average. Predictions for the current Year 2 class show that the trend of rising standards and improved performance has been maintained. Pupils grow in confidence and competence as they tackle increasingly challenging work and the good progress is maintained in Years 3 and 4. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disability, and for those with special educational needs, is good, and enables them to make progress equally as good as other groups. More could be done for more able pupils, particularly in writing, so that they might attain the same higher standards they reach in reading and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and are friendly and confident towards adults and each other. They learn to get on well with each other through paired and small group work in class. Behaviour is good. Pupils say they are happy at school and like their teachers, and the lessons they plan, because they are fun. They and their parents also appreciate the extra clubs and activities, which contribute well to pupils' enjoyment and physical well-being. Pupils feel safe and say they are comfortable in approaching adults with their concerns. They report that bullying hardly ever happens now and know what to do if it occurs. The Acorn Group gives pupils a voice in the school and they take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils have a very good understanding of a healthy life style and can talk knowledgably about healthy food choices. The school has good systems for monitoring attendance which is average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The monitoring of the quality of teaching has identified where and how it can improve. As a result, teaching is consistently good and is contributing well to pupils' achievement. Planning is good so that pupils know the purpose of the lessons and what they should and could achieve. Teaching is lively and resources such as interactive whiteboards are used creatively to make learning interesting and stimulating. Lessons are well managed and most pupils want to learn because they are well motivated. They speak of enjoying their lessons because 'teachers make them fun'. A notable feature of lessons in the Nursery and Reception classes is the way in which children's independence is fostered through allowing them to make their own choices. Teaching assistants give good support to pupils with learning and disability difficulties and those with special educational and emotional needs. As a result, these groups are fully included in lessons and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of learners well. Planning in the Foundation Stage focuses effectively on developing communication and social skills. Teachers plan opportunities to promote independence by allowing children to make choices about materials and resources for themselves. The curriculum contributes well to pupil's personal development through work in art and physical education, which are strengths of the school. The curriculum is fully inclusive through the good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those with special educational needs. In all classes the creative side of the curriculum has been developed well. This is reflected in pupils' work on displays around the school. Pupils take particular pride in talking about their work on display. Basic skills are developing and links are being made between English and other subjects, such as art, ICT and science. Additional support for learning through a wide range of visitors to school contributes well to pupils' cultural development. Pupils enthusiastically attend the good extra-curricular activities which are offered by the school such as the gym club and multi-skills club. Both make a good contribution to pupils' awareness of the value of exercise and a healthy life-style. While links between subjects are developing well more could be done to allow pupils to use their skills in writing, mathematics and ICT in other areas of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality care, guidance and support lies at the heart of the work of the school. One parent commented that Alexander First School was 'the one we chose as we feel it has a great community spirit'. There are secure and strong procedures for child protection, health and safety and risk assessments, providing a safe learning environment. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with special educational and emotional needs are capably supported by well trained support staff. The new 'zero tolerance' behaviour policy has been well received by pupils themselves who say it has improved the day-to-day work in the school. One pupil said that 'everyone is much nicer to everyone else now'. A few parents raised concerns over this way of tackling behaviour but inspection evidence supports the school's view that it has been a success in creating a better learning environment. Good records of attendance, punctuality and medical incidents are kept and these contribute to pupils feeling safe and well cared for. While the school has good systems for collecting information on how well pupils are doing, it could make better use of this to target support for individuals and small groups to boost their rate of progress. The quality of marking in Year 2 is very good and provides a good model for the school to use in the future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy have been effective in setting a clear direction for the school and raising expectations for all pupils. This is reflected in the school improvement plan which has a good focus on raising standards. They has managed a period of rapid change well and developed a strong team spirit that has stood firm despite significant pupil turnover. Management at all levels is good with effective systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Whilst at an early stage, subject leaders are

beginning to play a more influential part in school development. They are starting to build up a good overview of the strengths and areas for improvement in their subjects. The opinions of parents and pupils are always valued and acted upon as appropriate. Good monitoring of teaching and learning has brought improvement in, for example, planning and assessment, and in helping to improve overall standards. However, more needs to be done to raise standards further, particularly in writing and mathematics. While the school has good systems to assess and track the progress of its pupils, better use could be made of this information to more closely target support for the academic progress of individuals and groups of pupils. The governing body has developed its role well since the last inspection. It is effectively organised and supports and challenges the senior leaders. It has a much higher profile in the school although its role in monitoring the school's performance is underdeveloped.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Alexander First School, Windsor, SL4 4XP

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit your school. I am so pleased you were able to help me by talking to me and showing me your work. The Acorn Group and other children told me how much you enjoy coming to school. I agree with them that your teachers are good and help to plan exciting and 'fun' lessons. I was very impressed by your good behaviour and how hard you worked.

Here are some other things I think your school does well:

- most of you are doing better in reading, writing and mathematics than you have done before
- your headteacher, the other teachers and the governors are doing a good job in leading and managing the school
- I agree with you that they take good care of you.

These are some things I think they could do even better:

- improve your standards in writing by giving you more opportunities to use your imagination when you write in other subjects
- let you use your skills in mathematics and ICT more when you are doing work in other subjects
- use the information they have about how well you are doing to plan help for those children who need it.

I really enjoyed my stay at Alexander First School and I hope you continue to do well in the future.

Good luck to you all

John Collins

Lead Inspector