



# Alvanley Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 111003  
**Local Authority** Cheshire  
**Inspection number** 288825  
**Inspection dates** 22–23 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Delia Hiscock

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Manley Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Alvanley, Frodsham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11		Cheshire WA6 9DD
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01928 722349
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	69	<b>Fax number</b>	01928 722349
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Gary Partington
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kate Walker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 February 2002		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This oversubscribed school serves a rural population. There is a much smaller than average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and a broadly average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All pupils are of White British heritage. The school is much smaller than average, with the numbers of pupils in each year group varying from 8 to 12. In September 2006, the school formed a federation with Manley Village Primary School. This involves shared headship and governance.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The steadfastness of the parents, the village community and the governors has forged an optimistic future for this much loved school. It is an improving school that is currently satisfactory in its effectiveness. After two years of uncertainty and several changes of acting headteacher, there is an excitement about the future. The staff have worked very well together to ensure minimal disruption for pupils, by maintaining the family climate and the good quality of pastoral care that the school is known for. Parents confirm that pupils' personal development and well-being are central to the work of the school. Pupils' good behaviour, courteousness and positive attitudes to work and play prepare them well for the future.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Most children enter the Reception class with expected skills and make good progress in all areas apart from writing where it is too slow. The results of national tests in 2006 at the end of both key stages reflect a decline in attainment. For example, overall standards by the end of Year 6 were low in 2006 compared with broadly average standards in 2004. This is in part because of the varying proportions of pupils with learning difficulties, some of which are complex. It is also because pupils, especially the more able, have not been challenged sufficiently to achieve better in writing, mathematics and science. These weaknesses have been tackled well by the school through tracking progress rigorously and raising expectations of what pupils should attain. The school's information and pupils' work demonstrate that pupils' attainment has risen and they are making satisfactory progress throughout the school.

The current acting headteacher has built on the effective developments undertaken during the past year. To ensure that each pupil makes consistently good progress, assessment information now sets out precisely what each child should achieve within a defined period of time. This is the key initiative that is now improving writing in Reception and Key Stage 1 and mathematics in Key Stage 2. Additional support for pupils in Key Stage 2 is helping them make better progress in literacy, enhancing their problem-solving skills in mathematics and improving their ability to carry out scientific investigations. The effective curriculum provides an impressive range of enrichment and other activities. During the unsettled period, enjoyment has taken precedence over achievement. Now, improving pupils' basic skills feature strongly.

The school's current evaluation of its work is largely accurate. Leadership takes good account of and acts upon the predominantly positive views of parents and of pupils. The newly formed joint governing body oversees the two schools. It is informed and eager to further the school's development. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science at the end of both key stages, and of more able pupils in particular.
- Make teaching more consistently brisk and exciting.

- Develop further pupils' understanding of how to improve their work.
- Develop subject leaders' skills in promoting higher standards and achievement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve satisfactorily. This has not been the case over the last three years when significant disruption to teaching and learning and many changes in the school's leadership and management had a negative impact on pupils' achievement.

Children enter the Reception class with broadly average skills and make good progress overall. They reach or exceed the targets set for them in all areas of their learning, apart from in writing where their standards are below average. As a result of higher expectations and more focused teaching, standards are now rising in Years 1 and 2 and pupils are making satisfactory progress in mathematics and good progress in reading and writing. .

In Years 3 to 6, most pupils are progressing at least satisfactorily in English, mathematics and science. This is because they have been organised into smaller teaching groups and teachers have higher expectations of most of them. However, more able pupils still do not achieve as well as they might because the work they are set is often too easy for them. Year 6 pupils are now working at a level which makes it more likely that they will meet the realistic targets set for them in the 2007 national tests. This has not been the case in recent years.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy school. Their positive attitudes are seen in their high level of attendance, good behaviour and friendly relationships. Pupils know what it is to be healthy and how to keep safe. At lunchtime and break times, they take on important responsibilities such as play leaders to support younger children. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously. For example, its members have written letters to the village community seeking help in keeping the school free from vandalism out of school hours. Pupils are independent and make a positive contribution to the school community. They also understand the diversity of cultures and heritages in the world. They have satisfactory basic skills and use information and communications technology (ICT) well to support their learning in a range of subjects.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers provide good explanations and pupils particularly enjoy learning when lessons are practical or imaginatively planned. This is partly because interactive whiteboards are used effectively to motivate and capture pupils' attention. Teachers promote good relationships and behaviour to which pupils respond positively. However, there are some weaknesses in the quality of teaching that result in some pupils making slower progress. At times, teachers talk too much, limiting the time available for pupils to discuss their work or to settle at tasks independently. In some lessons, the work set does not match pupils' needs sufficiently, especially in terms of providing enough challenge for more able pupils. This is why progress is satisfactory rather than good. Checks are now in place to ensure that pupils work more consistently towards the targets set for them. However, they are not provided with enough guidance about how to improve their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities learn as well as others and those who have complex needs are generally well supported. In some instances, these pupils make good progress towards the small steps set for them.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, including that for pupils' personal, social, health education. There is a very good range of activities, visits and clubs to extend pupils' skills and encourage their keen participation in the arts. These promote enjoyment and cater for pupils' varied talents and interests. Other good features of the curriculum include opportunities to learn to speak French and impressive residential visits that involve all pupils in Years 1 to 6 and include children in the Reception who visit during the day while others stay overnight.

Features that now bring fun and deeper insights for pupils include drama performances and a wide range of science topics. Provision for the Foundation Stage is good and leads to much lively conversation and good progress overall. However, there are too few opportunities for children to begin writing.

There is satisfactory and improving provision to develop skills of literacy, numeracy and good links across subjects through ICT in Years 1 to 6. In the mixed aged classes, the challenge for more able pupils is not always well planned. The addition of a school hall has improved both the conditions in which pupils work and the scope of activities they undertake.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The level of care, guidance and support provided for pupils is good. The effective teamwork between teachers, learning support assistants and outside agencies ensures that pastoral care is very good. Pupils feel safe and valued and they respond with much respect for others. Child protection procedures and the arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place and include effective risk assessments. Pupils say they feel well supported in their learning and that their new academic targets are helpful in telling them what they should achieve. The school's use of assessment information to track pupils' progress is now used well by leadership to identify any underachievement and, in most cases is used effectively used by teachers to set greater challenge. However, in Key Stage 2, pupils do not have enough specific guidance to help them to improve their work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher, one of three in the last two years, has been in post for one term. Leadership is now uncompromisingly focused on raising attainment. Evaluation is accurate, builds on the work of previous leaders and has informed decisions to recruit staff who have improved pupils' progress and learning. The current subject leaders have made a huge step forward in undertaking and leading professional development as well as making a good contribution to smooth day to day running of the school during the unsettled period. However, they are not yet skilled enough to raise attainment and achievement further. Good links with other schools and with parents and the local community enrich the expertise and support on which the school can draw to augment learning. The new governing body includes much experience and expertise which enables it to be effective in supporting and challenging the school's work in the interest of all the pupils. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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
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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

I really enjoyed my visit to your school and I won't forget it because you were so polite and interesting to chat with. I was pleased to hear about all the activities you get involved in and how you look after your school so well. I am writing this letter to tell you that I found your school to be providing you with a satisfactory education and that it is also improving.

Everyone in the school tries to make sure that you are well looked after, especially those of you who need more help. The school also provides lots of activities to help you to develop your interests and to keep you fit and healthy. What super residential experiences many of you have.

I'm sure that you will be pleased to know that I found out that you behave well and that you work hard even though, at times, some lessons are not as interesting as you would like them to be. I think that there are lots of new things happening in school too. It's an exciting time, now that the school is linked with Manley Village School.

Your skills in English, mathematics and science are important. You will need these for the future.

I have asked the school to:

- help you to achieve more in the subjects I have mentioned, especially those of you who can work faster
- make lessons a bit more exciting and more of a challenge
- help you to improve some of your work for yourself
- help the staff to learn new skills too.

Keep up your hard work and look after each other. I really enjoyed the Chinese lunch. It was great fun even though I missed seeing the Dragon!