

Alderman Richard Hallam Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120107
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	291630
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	667
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	V Bolsover
Headteacher	David Burgess / Lee Venning
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	Avebury Avenue Leicester LE4 0FQ
Telephone number	0116 262 4003
Fax number	0116 253 0328

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very large school serves an area of mixed residential housing in the north-east of Leicester. Numbers on roll have fluctuated in recent years but are markedly higher than at the time of the previous inspection, and are set to rise further. Getting on for half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with a quarter of Indian heritage. For a high proportion of pupils, around a third, English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational needs.

Earlier this year, the school entered a 'soft' federation arrangement to provide leadership support to a neighbouring school facing challenging circumstances. The headteacher of Alderman Hallam is currently executive headteacher of both schools, while his deputy is in day-to-day charge of Alderman Hallam as acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school, and one which has shown good improvement over the last two years. During that time, the school has successfully built on its long-established strengths of promoting positive attitudes, caring relationships and good behaviour among its pupils. It has successfully tackled the widespread underachievement evident two years ago, and pupils now make satisfactory progress to reach standards, which are generally in line with national averages. This turnaround of pupils' academic achievement is linked closely to improvements in the effectiveness of leadership and management throughout the school. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteachers have given much support to other leaders at all levels, including governors and subject leaders, to develop their roles in school self-evaluation. Throughout the school there is a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and leaders have developed coherent plans to move the school forward. Many of these plans are in early phases of implementation and have yet to have full impact in improving the quality of provision.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers do much to promote pupils' positive attitudes by managing their classes well and by celebrating everyone's efforts through highly stimulating displays of pupils' work. They develop pupils' independent learning skills effectively by setting well-designed tasks in 'learning logs'. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, although the quality of the marking varies. Marking does not always make it clear to pupils how they can improve, particularly in relation to the targets they have been set. Information from regular assessments of pupils' progress is becoming increasingly well used to offer additional support to pupils who are in danger of underachieving. However, teachers do not always use this information effectively to plan tasks in class which are better matched to pupils' capabilities. Higher attainers are therefore not always challenged enough and, in Key Stage 1 in particular, too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment.

Parents have a high regard for the school and many praise the way that children are settled into school life by the care and approachability of staff in the Foundation stage classes. Across all years, pupils feel safe and secure in a school which offers high standards of care and which promotes tolerance, understanding and mutual respect. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. 'The teachers are really lovely. We have a lot of fun at school, and we look after each other,' said one of the younger pupils. Look after each other they do: by taking on roles as buddies, monitors or school councillors, or less formally through simple courtesy and use of the 'friendship stop'. The school's satisfactory curriculum is developing in its breadth and relevance. Increasingly, the learning of basic skills and subject knowledge is linked to interesting themes and activities, which stimulates pupils' enjoyment and contributes to their better progress. A significant rise in the school's attendance figures, from well below average to just about in line, is a mark of pupils' growing enjoyment of school and of the success of the school's improvement strategies. Together with the significant improvement in pupils' progress, it underlines the school's good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Foundation Stage in the Nursery with skills that are expected at this stage. They make satisfactory progress and, by the end of the Foundation Stage, standards are in line with those found nationally. Children are introduced to school routines well so that they feel

confident and enjoy learning. Home visits by staff ensure that they gain some understanding of the social, personal, emotional and academic needs of the children before they start school. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Resources are generally used well to develop children's independent learning skills, but opportunities for children's outdoor learning are too limited at present as provision is not sufficiently developed. Not all teachers make consistently good use of assessment to plan to develop children's skills, particularly in communication, language and literacy. New leadership of the Foundation Stage has made an effective start by introducing new systems to assess and monitor children's progress and to plan the curriculum, but these have yet to have full impact.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work in class is well matched to pupils' capabilities, particularly to help raise standards for the more able at Key Stage 1.
- Link marking more effectively to targets to show pupils how to improve and identify the 'next steps' in their learning.
- Improve the use of assessment in the Foundation Stage to help teachers plan to develop children's skills, especially in communication, language and literacy.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 have tended to fluctuate year on year between average and below average. In 2005, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 dropped markedly and test results indicated significant underachievement. Standards have recovered since that time and pupils have made much-improved progress in each successive year. Progress in mathematics has been strong over Key Stage 2. Progress in English has been less strong, but writing standards have begun to improve as pupils work towards clear targets to secure their technical competence and take opportunities to set their writing in interesting contexts. Standards of the current Year 6 are broadly average; their achievement across Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were below average in 2007 national tests and some groups, particularly boys and higher attainers, underachieved. Standards of the current Year 2 are also below average, but this reflects their low attainment on entry to the school, and their progress is generally satisfactory. However, still too few attain higher levels. Across the school, pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress and reach standards higher than their peers, having made the most of their ability and benefited from targeted support in their early years in school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. Their maturity, self-confidence and positive attitudes to learning develop strongly from the Foundation Stage onwards. The sound development of their literacy and numeracy skills, together with good use of information and communication technology (ICT) and independent research skills, gives them satisfactory preparation for later life. Pupils' good behaviour makes a significant contribution to the quality of their learning in lessons, and to their feeling safe and secure. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good

overall. They develop a strong respect for and understanding of the diverse cultures and faiths in the school community. Spiritual awareness is satisfactory overall but is less well developed among the younger pupils as opportunities for spiritual reflection are missed in Key Stage 1 assemblies. Pupils contribute well to the school and wider community; they know that their contributions and ideas are valued. The relatively new school council has been successful in improving some aspects of school life. Its current drive to help the school promote healthy lifestyles is having some success in raising awareness of healthy eating, although many older pupils still do not choose healthy options. Participation in physical activities outside of class is relatively limited but improving .

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has put in place appropriate strategies to support and improve teaching, and this is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Nevertheless, the good practice seen is not consistent across the school. In particular, assessment information is not always used well to plan activities which match the capabilities of all groups of pupils, so that higher attainers are not always offered sufficient challenge. Teachers work effectively with teaching assistants to provide support for groups or individuals whose progress needs boosting. Most lessons capture pupils' interest, involve them in stimulating and creative activities and elicit sustained concentration. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good. Resources, especially the interactive whiteboards, are used very effectively to help pupils to take an active part in their own learning. The use of learning logs for homework gives pupils many opportunities to develop their independent learning skills and enables parents to be effectively involved in their children's learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

One parent remarked that 'the curriculum adopted by the school really keeps my child interested in learning'. This curriculum increasingly offers breadth and balance while stimulating pupils' enjoyment by promoting exciting links between subjects. Some effective work is undertaken following visits or talks by visitors. However, links between subjects are tenuous and while a start has been made, pupils' books show that opportunities are sometimes missed to develop their writing and number skills by applying them in other subjects. The range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities is sound, especially for sport and art. Music and drama opportunities are less well developed. Resources to support the curriculum are generally good, and shortcomings in outdoor play provision in the Foundation Stage are soon to be addressed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from good quality care for their safety and well-being, and from staff who know them well. Requirements for safeguarding pupils' welfare are fully met. The school works well with partner agencies in support of pupils. For example, its work with the Education Welfare Service has made significant improvements to pupils' attendance and punctuality and ensure that parents have very clear guidelines on attendance. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored to determine where additional support may be needed. This helps pupils with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities make generally satisfactory progress. Those with emotional and behavioural difficulties make good progress against their targets. Pupils generally are aware of the targets they should be working towards in literacy and numeracy, but they do not always refer to these adequately when completing or checking their work. Similarly, teachers' marking does not refer sufficiently to these targets to show pupils how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The executive headteacher has worked effectively to develop the leadership and management capacity of the school by strengthening leadership at all levels. Consequently, governors now have satisfactory procedures for finding out about the strengths and weaknesses of the school so that they can hold the school to account for its performance. The executive head teacher has, together with his deputy (the now acting headteacher), supported middle leaders in more carefully scrutinising the performance of their subjects and teams, and in planning for improvement. While it is too early to fully evaluate, federation appears to have had the beneficial effect of encouraging other leaders in the school to step forward and play a more effective role in school self-evaluation and improvement planning. Improvements made in the school's performance overall have not yet demonstrated full impact. Targets for improvement in academic performance are also inconsistent: they are realistic and challenging by the end of Key Stage 2, but less effective for the end of Key Stage 1. Teams of teachers now have time to plan together, and this has been successful in establishing higher expectations of performance throughout the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	3
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

16 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alderman Richard Hallam Primary School, Leicester, LE4 0FQ

Thank you for the welcome you gave to my colleagues and me when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We really enjoyed talking to you in lessons, meetings, in the playground and over lunch. We were very impressed by your confidence in discussing your views about the school. You clearly enjoy the school very much, and get on very well with the staff and with each other. We much appreciated your kindness and courtesy towards us, and it is clear that you show the same consideration and respect for each other. The school looks after you very well, and helps everyone to feel safe and secure.

The school gives you a satisfactory education. You make sound progress to reach standards which are similar to those in most schools. The headteachers of your school have introduced a lot of changes over the last few years to help to improve the progress you make, and these are having success. They have helped governors and leaders of subjects to carry out their work more effectively. They have helped teachers plan interesting lessons which cover a number of subjects and which are set on interesting topics, such as the Year 5 project on the Greeks. You produce some really good work in your learning logs, which are very successful in getting you to think for yourself in organising your work. It is good to see that attendance at school has improved so much, and that pupils are taking less time away during the term.

My inspection report indicates a number of ways in which the school can get even better. First, while the teaching is satisfactory, I have asked teachers to make sure that they plan work which gives everyone the right amount of challenge. This will help more pupils in Years 1 and 2 in particular reach higher levels in their work. Second, I have asked teachers to give you clearer guidance on how to improve your work, especially by making more reference to your targets in their marking. You can help here by looking carefully at your targets as you complete your work, to check that you are meeting these. Third, I have asked all staff in the Foundation Stage to make more use of their records of how children are doing when planning their next activities.

I wish you every success for the future.

Ian Hodgkinson Lead inspector

16 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alderman Richard Hallam Primary School, Leicester, LE4 OFQ

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Lead inspector