

Alne Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121369
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	292092
Inspection date	21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Bowles HMI

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	123
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Glynn Moakes
Headteacher	Mr Paul Platt
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2002
School address	Main Street Alne York North Yorkshire YO61 1RT
Telephone number	01347 838427
Fax number	01347 838427

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	21 June 2007
Inspection number	292092

© Crown copyright 2007

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Alne Primary School is situated in a rural setting 10 miles north of York. The majority of pupils come from the five villages within a three miles radius of the school. All of the pupils are White British. The number of pupils has increased by 10% in the past three years. Pupils are grouped into five classes. All classes apart from one, this year the Reception class, consist of pupils from two year groups. The percentage of pupils entitled to school meals free of charge is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the percentage having a statement of special educational need are also well below the national average. When children first start at the school in the Reception class, their personal skills are mainly above those expected for their age and their academic skills are broadly average. However, with so few children in each cohort, children's attainment on entry can vary from year to year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Alne Primary is a good and happy school, where pupils are taught well and reach above average standards. The staff's exemplary care, guidance and support for pupils make a strong contribution to their outstanding personal development and well-being and their good progress. They make a good start in the Reception class because of good provision and effective links with parents and the nearby pre-school from which many pupils transfer. Special features of the school's provision include the opportunities for pupils to develop life skills and learn about the wider world, the varied out of school hours' activities and rewarding links with the community.

The school is well led and managed so that teaching is consistently good and pupils' progress is kept under review. Though the school is popular, it is not complacent: it understands its strengths and its weaknesses well and takes a measured and consultative approach to improvement. It recognises that, though standards are high and pupils' progress is never less than satisfactory, some features need to improve. These include the quality of pupils' writing and their investigative skills. The headteacher has worked well with his colleagues to improve the quality of teaching and learning with these priorities in mind and this has begun to have an impact on pupils' motivation and standards. Teachers pose interesting questions and give pupils time to discuss their ideas. They are increasingly successful in helping pupils to form a clear understanding of the purpose of tasks and what will make their work successful. The impact of these approaches is beginning to be seen in the improved quality of pupils' writing and their enthusiasm to achieve well. Though test results have yet to confirm the impact of these strategies, this shows the school has good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards of writing and investigative skills.
- Ensure the monitoring of teaching looks carefully at its impact on pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are high and achievement is good. The pupils consistently reach higher than average standards by the end of each key stage. The small cohorts vary from year to year, but in some years the test results of 11 year olds have been very high in comparison with schools nationally. Pupils arrive in the Reception year with levels of academic attainment in line with what is typical for their age, but higher in social skills. Most make a good start in learning, reach the Early Learning Goals by the start of Year 1 and make progress steadily throughout their time at the school. Taking account of contextual factors, boys and girls perform similarly well and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve in line with expectations. Caution is needed in interpreting results in a small school, but pupils' progress has varied over the past five years between very good and average. In 2006 the school did not reach some of its challenging targets. As it realised, the standard of the pupils' writing was average and this was an obstacle to higher achievement. The impact of the steps the school has taken to improve the quality of writing and independent learning at both key stages is beginning to show. Pupils now have a good understanding of the quality of their work and how to do better. In both key stages pupils have composed some well structured and effective writing in their fortnightly 'Big Write' sessions, because they have been well prepared and supported by their teachers. The school's

monitoring gives reliable evidence of good progress by each class this year and pupils' enthusiasm for independent learning is high. Thus the full range of evidence indicates that pupils are making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Their enjoyment of school is indicated by their high attendance and the very enthusiastic appreciation which virtually all of them, and their parents, expressed. Pupils treat each other considerately and say they feel safe. In the course of Reception class activities children were learning to manage reasonable risks safely, to look after their hygiene and to cooperate well with each other. Most older pupils are appropriately aware of risks, have sensible attitudes to their health and say that adults help them well when they go through difficult times.

At playtime, boys and girls of all ages happily and vigorously rehearsed their dance for the village fair - a typical example of the imaginative way the school encourages healthy, enjoyable and community-minded activity. There are many others: with good parental support, the school offers a walking bus and a popular range of games and activities after school. An after school distance running club observed during the inspection attracted a good range of participants and was well managed to be inclusive as well as physically stretching. Pupils of all ages enjoy the outdoor life: they look after a well-loved sensory garden and a vegetable plot and speak with pride of the improvements to play spaces they have helped to design.

The school develops pupils' skills particularly well in speaking and listening, mental mathematics and the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils also deal well with work-like responsibilities, for example, when organising themed Caf, events. Older pupils discuss ethical questions thoughtfully and are interested in global issues such as fair trade and biodiversity, which have been explored through lessons, visits and assemblies. Pupils take responsibility for contributing to improving their school through their council and by taking care of younger pupils and they regularly mix with senior citizens in the community. They are prepared very well for the transition to secondary school: in discussion, they reflected with insight on their recent experiences of living and working with pupils from other rural schools. They looked forward to the next stage of education with confidence tinged with regret for leaving the school they are so fond of.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently effective and pupils learn well. Teachers' assessments are accurate and are used well to plan suitable lessons and monitor pupils' progress. Teachers make good use of resources including ICT and of other adults to meet the wide range of needs in their mixed age classes. Trained teaching assistants plan and monitor progress jointly with teachers and are well deployed to support learning. Relationships are good and learning is well managed so that lessons include both lively discussion and quiet concentration.

A strength seen across the classes was teachers' commitment to explaining how pupils can make their work good, through sharing the success criteria for tasks and giving clear feedback

in their marking. This use of assessment for learning is developing well and is good in most lessons, though evaluation and refinement is needed to make sure it always works well for pupils. Occasionally, for example, pupils have difficulty making sense of the criteria or linking them to the main purpose of the task. When the criteria reflect the pupils' understanding of the purpose of the task well, the approach is successful in challenging the abler pupils and helping those making slower progress to understand what they need to do. Teachers give work a clear purpose and sometimes use stimulating questions and activities to involve pupils in thinking critically and creatively. This was well illustrated in a science investigation linked to the fair trade theme, when pairs of pupils discussed ways to improve and evaluate the quality of tomato plants, in an animated yet critical manner.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good broad curriculum. It meets statutory requirements and provides well for progression in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Appropriate interventions have had a positive impact on those who make slower progress. Planning the curriculum around 'schemes and themes' supports links between subjects and gives pupils a sense of purpose and coherence in their work. This smaller than average rural school provides a remarkable range of curricular enrichment by tapping into a wealth of local contributions and opportunities. Pupils were keen to demonstrate their familiarity with other languages and the new interests and skills they had learned in Friday enrichment sessions. The school encourages the gifted and talented to fulfil their potential through a developing range of special activities. It works with its cluster of local schools to bring pupils together to learn, for example, by making presentations to each other on social issues. Visits such as one to a biodiversity farm have raised pupils' awareness of global sustainability.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed, usually strongly, that the school serves them unusually well in this respect. There are very thoughtful arrangements to ensure children settle well into school, whether in Reception or as later arrivals, and to involve parents in their education. Many parents provided examples of how the headteacher and staff value each child as an individual and had done their utmost to respond to individual concerns, though a few felt the school could communicate better. Current government requirements for safeguarding children are in place and the inclusion of more vulnerable pupils always influences the work of the school, reinforcing the family atmosphere. Outstanding care is given by skilled staff who understand how to keep children safe. When health or welfare problems arise the school makes effective use of specialist support. Academic guidance and support is developing well: pupils know their personal targets and, in most cases, what to do to achieve them. Progress is carefully tracked, with careful assessment of the small steps of learning made by those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Progress below expectations is followed up and there are many examples of intervention leading to accelerated progress. The school supports parents well to help pupils learn and pupils say teachers and assistants are good at helping them to do better. Achievement is recognised through individual notes and in assemblies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a strong personal lead on the promotion of equality of opportunity and high achievement, which the staff supports enthusiastically. The headteacher has focussed successfully on the key issues raised by the previous inspection and governors are well informed and able to challenge and support. The way the school leadership has used data to evaluate its work and linked this to the plan for improvement is excellent. Parents have been consulted and pupils feel involved in changes. The school development plan is clear about expectations and success criteria. There has been suitable investment in professional development for teachers and support staff, so that all share a good understanding of aims and their part in improvement. Staff are accountable for specific performance targets. Regular monitoring of teaching and pupils' work has led to an accurate assessment of its quality and some constructive written feedback to staff, but now needs to focus even more sharply on how effective teaching is in accelerating each pupil's progress.

Pupils' achievement as measured by tests is yet to show a consistent upward trend in all areas, notably writing. This makes the pace of improvement satisfactory. The necessary groundwork for raising achievement has been done and several features of provision are better than at the time of the last inspection. Changes have had a positive impact on attitudes to learning. On the full range of evidence, the school shows a good capacity for 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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	2

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?	1

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	2
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

Thank you for your warm welcome when I visited your school recently. I greatly enjoyed talking to you and hearing about what you like about your school. I came to the conclusion that your school is good. Here are some of the reasons.

- You work hard and enjoy learning.
- You make good progress and reach high standards.
- Your school is a happy and friendly place.
- You behave considerately.
- Your teachers help you learn independently by explaining how to do your work well.
- Your lessons are made interesting with discussions, games and investigations.
- As you told me, the school staff care for you extremely well and do their best to help you when life is hard.
- You get involved in lots of activities which keep you fit and give you new interests.
- You are well prepared for moving on to your next school.
- Your headteacher does a good job in helping you all to do well and is keen to improve the school.

I have asked your teachers to check carefully that you make as much progress as you can in lessons. Your writing is one area where you could do better and you can play a big part in this by thinking hard about your success criteria!

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful. I wish you all well for the future.