



Alfred Street Junior School, Rushden

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121857
Local Authority Northamptonshire
Inspection number 292243
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Chris Kessell

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	College Street
School category	Community		Rushden
Age range of pupils	7–11		NN10 9YS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01933 353762
Number on roll (school)	245	Fax number	01933 355955
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Michael Davis
		Headteacher	John Kidney
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Alfred Street Junior School is slightly above average in size. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. The school roll has been falling and this is expected to continue for the next few years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Alfred Street provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. 'Alfo', as the school is known in the local community, has a number of strengths. They mainly relate to the good personal development and well-being of the pupils and their good pastoral care. The school is effective at promoting a sense of 'family'. One parent summarised the views of many when writing, 'My children love school and feel safe and confident.' Pupils are self-assured and take pleasure in all that the school has to offer. This is reflected in their above average levels of attendance. Pupils enjoy their lessons and the many additional activities that the school provides. Their enthusiasm to do well is reflected in their pride in participating in the school's Christmas concert. Although the care provided by the school is good, academic guidance is less effective. Many pupils do not understand their personal learning targets and teachers' marking does not always provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve. Consequently, care, guidance and support are satisfactory.

Key areas of the school's provision which affect pupils' progress, such as teaching and learning and the curriculum, are satisfactory. Pupils are keen to learn and the vast majority behave well in lessons. They work well together in groups and talk about their activities confidently. Classroom relationships are strong. Every now and then, the pace of lessons is too slow and this prevents pupils from making the progress they are capable of. The school has a good range of assessment information that is used to track individual pupils' progress and plan lessons. This information is not always used consistently to ensure that all pupils are given the right type of work for their ability and understanding. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 6 are average. Higher attaining pupils do not always do as well in writing as they do in reading, mathematics and science.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. There are inconsistencies in school practice that have not been fully addressed, such as those in teaching. Senior managers have not yet ensured that all pupils make consistently good progress although they have been successful in creating a good climate for learning. The school has a good reputation within the local community and there is a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Self-evaluation is satisfactory although governors are insufficiently involved. The headteacher and senior managers know what needs to be done in developing and improving the school's provision. This is clearly recognised in the current school development plan although targets for improvement are not specific enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that higher attaining pupils do as well in their writing as they do in other subjects.
- Ensure that teachers make better use of assessment information when planning activities so that pupils are consistently given work appropriate to their individual needs and capabilities.

- Improve the school's procedures for marking pupils' work and setting pupils' individual learning targets so that they make a better contribution to improving achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. School data indicates that at times, groups of pupils make good progress, but this is not consistent because it is affected by variations in teaching. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. It is the same for boys and girls and different ability groups. Higher attaining pupils do not do as well as they should in their writing. This is because they are given insufficient opportunities to write at length to develop and practise their writing skills. By the end of Year 6, standards are average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same satisfactory progress as their classmates. When they are given good targeted support in lessons, they make good progress.

The school is improving its procedures for setting academic targets, which, in the past, have not been sufficiently challenging. Data are now being used more effectively to set realistic and more ambitious targets. Pupils are developing satisfactory skills in literacy and numeracy to equip them for the next stage of their education and later life.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. They are growing into confident and well-rounded young people. Pupils behave well and follow the 'Alfo Way' by listening well, speaking respectfully, following instructions, working hard, looking after things and staying safe. For example, they move around the school in a safe and orderly manner. Pupils get on well with each other and the school staff. Interesting and thought provoking school assemblies enhance their spiritual development. Pupils know how to keep healthy and understand the importance of exercise and diet but do not always transfer their knowledge and understanding into practice. As one pupil commented, 'What amazes me is the amount of sweets that some children bring in for playtime.'

Pupils contribute well to the school community through the work of the school council and by taking on special jobs, such as being responsible for playtime equipment and assembly monitors. They also give good support to the wider community through fund raising and participation in local events. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory rather than any better because pupils do not have enough opportunity to learn about a wide range of cultural traditions and practices.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

'Teachers are kind and helpful. They give us tips about what to do.' This comment reflects pupils' trust in their teachers and the positive way in which they approach learning tasks. Good relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils are confident to ask for help. Teachers are good at making sure that pupils remain attentive and do what they are supposed to, although a few lessons lack urgency and learning could be more rapid. In a number of lessons, all pupils tackle the same activity. This means that sometimes the work is too easy for some and too difficult for others. Teachers give pupils some useful feedback on how well they are doing and are good at encouraging pupils to assess their own progress. Despite this, there is inconsistency from class to class in the quality of written marking and so pupils do not always know what they have to do to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are catered for effectively and when they are supported by teaching assistants, often do well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a satisfactory foundation for the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Planning for work in different subjects is sound. The school is beginning to make effective links between subjects. The development of writing skills, for example, is planned in a number of other subjects. This has not yet had an impact on pupils' progress or standards, partly because higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are not systematically developed in other subjects. The school has just been awarded an 'Activemark' for improvements to the provision for pupils' physical education. The good programme for pupils' personal, social and health education is having a positive impact on their personal development. Work in lessons is successfully enhanced by a good range of interesting activities outside lessons. These include three annual residential trips, a range of visits and a number of after school clubs. These are greatly appreciated by the pupils and parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The good quality care that pupils receive from all adults contributes well to their personal development and well-being. The school has effective procedures in place to ensure pupils stay safe and healthy. Staff know the pupils well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are carefully supported and there is good liaison with feeder schools and other agencies to ensure their needs are met. Academic guidance is less effective. Teachers' marking is inconsistent and many pupils are confused by their individual learning targets. The school has introduced new procedures to keep

a more careful track on pupils' individual progress but these have not yet had sufficient impact on improving pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and staff have been successful in creating a happy school that is popular with both parents and pupils. Both groups know that their views count and that the school is willing to listen to concerns and suggestions. Governance is satisfactory. The governors are very committed and supportive of the school. Financial resources are well organised and managed to counter the effect of the school's falling roll. Governors are not sufficiently involved in self-evaluation or development planning. They rely too heavily on the headteacher in these processes although this is being improved. Senior managers regularly evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, but not all subject co-ordinators have been involved in checking the quality of provision in their own subjects. This is currently being developed. The senior managers recognise that there needs to be more consistency in school practice before pupils' achievement moves beyond being satisfactory. This is currently being addressed though a number of initiatives but it is too early to judge their impact.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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?	3

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.

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 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	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

Thank you for welcoming us and being so helpful when we came to inspect your school. I am writing to tell you what we think about how well your school is helping you to learn.

We think that your school is satisfactory, with some things that are good. By the time you leave school at the end of Year 6, your work is similar to the work done in most other schools in English, mathematics and science. A few of you who find writing easy could be doing a bit better. The teachers are doing a sound job making sure that you all make steady progress.

Your school is a happy place to be in and everyone is friendly and welcoming. You get on well with each other and behave well. All of the adults in your school make sure you are safe and well looked after. You enjoy coming to school and appreciate the good range of extra activities that the school provides in addition to the satisfactory range of work in lessons.

Your headteacher and all of the other people who help run your school want it to be even better, so this is what we have suggested. We would like those of you who find English easy, to do even harder work. There are times when a few of you find your work either too easy or too hard. We have asked the school to look very carefully at how well you are all getting on and then give you work that is at the right level. We would also like your teachers to make sure that you all develop a better understanding of your individual learning targets in English and mathematics and how they can help you make good progress.

Best wishes for the future.