

Acorns Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130873
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	293650
Inspection date	28 February 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jacque Brown
Headteacher	Jeanette Goddard
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2005
School address	School Close Long Compton Shipston-on-Stour CV36 5LA
Telephone number	01608 684654
Fax number	01608 684654

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small village school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties has been above average in the recent past but is now below average. The school was placed in special measures in 2003 but was brought out of special measures in 2005 after the current headteacher joined the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school's view of itself is not realistic. Its self-evaluation is over-generous and does not provide an effective basis for planning improvement. This is because the evaluation has not been based on a rigorous programme of checking and evaluating standards, achievement and teaching. Leadership and management are inadequate. School leaders have not demonstrated the capability of bringing about the changes to the school that are needed. Improvement since the previous inspection has been too slow and important weaknesses that were identified two years ago have not been adequately addressed.

The school's strengths are the cosy family atmosphere and the staff's thorough knowledge of each child's personal circumstances. Personal development is satisfactory. The majority of pupils enjoy school but some of the pupils do not find lessons interesting, particularly mathematics. Although pupils are chatty and outgoing, they lack confidence in their academic abilities. Pupils know how to keep healthy and safe and they genuinely care about each other. Behaviour is good. Most parents are pleased with provision, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, but some express justifiable concerns about the quality of education in other parts of the school.

Achievement is inadequate and standards are below average. The children's start to school is promising. They are involved in an interesting range of activities in the Nursery and Reception and as a result of satisfactory provision they make satisfactory progress. When pupils start Year 1, their standards are broadly average. They make satisfactory progress through Years 1 and 2. Although they have fluctuated in recent years, standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average. Standards at the end of Year 6 are below average and achievement is inadequate. Pupils are capable of much more. In 2006, standards in mathematics and science were particularly low and pupils' progress in mathematics and science is still far too slow. Teaching and learning are inadequate and not of sufficiently high quality to arrest the underachievement in Years 3 to 6. Work is not always matched to pupils' needs and teachers' expectations are often not high enough. This results in pupils not making adequate progress and, in particular, it slows the achievement of more able pupils.

The curriculum is satisfactory; pupils enjoy the interesting range of visits and visitors and join in extra-curricular activities. Care, support and guidance are inadequate. Pupils' personal needs are met well but academic guidance is inadequate, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Assessment procedures and the checking of progress are not rigorous enough and are not accurately identifying underachievement. Children do not always understand or remember their targets, and teachers' marking does not refer to targets or effectively tell pupils how to improve their work. This holds back pupils' progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop leadership and management, including monitoring and evaluation, at all levels so there is a clear basis for planning improvements and reliable strategies for seeing them through.
- Improve achievement in Years 3 to 6, particularly in mathematics and science, by raising teachers' expectations, making lessons more interesting and improving pupils' confidence in their own abilities.
- Use accurate assessment to check pupils' progress and identify and address underachievement by ensuring that work set provides all pupils, including the more able, with sufficient challenge.
- Tell pupils clearly what they have to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The introduction of a phonics programme has quickened the progress of children in the Nursery and Reception and, in 2006, pupils entered Year 1 with above average standards. Parents recognise this. One described her child as having 'come on in leaps and bounds in Reception, especially in letters, phonics and reading'. In 2006, achievement was inadequate by the end of Year 6 although pupils with learning difficulties made slightly better progress than other pupils. Progress through Years 3 to 6 is very uneven and is inadequate overall. Although the school feels that standards in writing have improved, they are still below average and even the more able older pupils continue to make elementary errors of spelling, grammar and punctuation. This holds back their achievement. Achievement in mathematics and science is inadequate and too few pupils reach the higher levels. Few pupils are confident about mathematics, particularly fractions and percentages and their recording of their science work and use of scientific words lacks accuracy.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a strong sense of fair play and a well-developed sense of right and wrong. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate the world around them and they respond well. Behaviour is good, both around school and in lessons. Pupils support each other well. Younger pupils enjoy their lessons but some older pupils mention getting bored in school. Younger pupils try hard in lessons and apply themselves well but too many pupils lack confidence in their academic abilities, particularly in writing and mathematics, typically making remarks like 'I am no good at writing' and even 'I hate maths'. Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils arrive at school on time. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school through doing jobs and their involvement in the school council. Because many pupils do not acquire acceptable standards in basic literacy and numeracy skills, they leave the school inadequately prepared for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the Nursery, Reception and Years 1 and 2, but are inadequate in Years 3 to 6. Younger pupils often find lessons interesting and learning fun but

lessons for older pupils sometimes move along slowly. This detracts from pupils' enjoyment of school and limits learning. Parents are correct when they voice concerns about whether older more able children are 'being challenged'. Teachers' expectations are often too low. In Years 1 and 2, work is usually well matched to pupils' needs and this supports satisfactory achievement, but in Years 3 to 6 the work set is not stretching pupils, particularly the more able. Pupils' targets are not used effectively in lessons and marking does not always give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Current arrangements ensure that pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum in this very small school. However, there is not enough to challenge the more able pupils. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage provides a good range of interesting activities that contribute well to children's learning and enjoyment. Provision for information and communication technology has recently improved and pupils now have access to modern computers and teaching programmes. The pupils have access to a suitable range of clubs and activities. Lacrosse has recently fired pupils' interest. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their visits to a Victorian house and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Teachers know pupils' personal circumstances very well and provide good personal support. A typical parent comment described teachers as 'thoughtful, caring and understanding of each individual child's needs'. The provision for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare is satisfactory and includes effective child protection procedures and satisfactory links with support agencies. Assessment procedures are good in the Foundation stage, but the monitoring of pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6 is inadequate. Checking of progress has only just begun and lacks rigour. This means that the school has been unable to identify early enough those pupils who are not making the expected progress. Consequently, the school has been unable to provide timely support to help pupils achieve their full potential. Pupils are not clear enough about short-term or long-term targets that would help them to be more ambitious and self-motivated. They have to rely too much on teachers; as pupils do not know how to improve their work, they cannot develop their abilities to learn independently.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Effective management of the Nursery and Reception supports satisfactory achievement in the Foundation Stage. The headteacher has struggled to cope with combining management responsibilities with a significant teaching load. There is no systematic programme for checking on the school's work, and the checks that are made are sporadic and lack rigour. This has resulted in important weaknesses not being identified. Development planning has not been precise enough and the pace of change has been too slow because there has not been the impetus to drive forward improvements. The previous inspection report identified that the management skills of staff and governors and their use of assessment data needed to improve, and this weakness remains. Governors are

supportive of the school but they do not do enough to hold staff to account for standards and achievement.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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?	4

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Acorns Primary, School Close, Long Compton, Shipston on Stour, Warwickshire CV36 5LA

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. You told me that your teachers look after you properly and try to help when you have problems. I think you make a valuable contribution to the school community through your work with the school council. I was pleased that you enjoyed your visits to the Victorian house and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. I am pleased that you behave well.

It is good that most of you enjoy school and work hard, but some pupils told me that, although they enjoy active lessons such as art, design and technology and physical education, they find some other lessons dull. Many of you said that you do not like mathematics lessons and were concerned about the teaching of mathematics. Your school is clearly not as good as it should be and I am recommending that it gets some extra help over the next year or so. Although the children in Nursery and Reception and Years 1 and 2 are doing as well as children in other schools, pupils in Years 3 to 6 are falling behind, especially in mathematics and science. I have asked teachers to make sure that standards improve. The quality of teaching is not good enough, especially in Years 3 to 6. I have asked your teachers to make sure that lessons are more interesting and that more difficult work is set for those of you who can do it. You told me that you did not always know how to improve your work so I have asked your teachers to check your progress carefully and set you targets that help you improve and to use marking to tell you clearly how to make your work better.

There is a lot to do to make your school as good as it should be and I have asked the headteacher and other staff to check the work of the school very carefully and to make sure the school improves.

I hope that you will do all you can to help your teachers when they are working hard to make your school better. I wish you all the best for the future.

Susan Walsh Lead Inspector