

Alban Wood Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134685
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	294149
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2007
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Lees
Headteacher	Mrs G.M. Leonard
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Brow Watford Hertfordshire WD25 7NX
Telephone number	01923 678240
Fax number	01923 678256

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is an average size school. It was opened in September 2005 following the closure of the Alban Wood Infant and Alban Wood Junior schools. Attainment on entry is below that of children aged 3. The school serves a diverse population. The socio-economic circumstances are very varied but average overall. Approximately one third of the pupils are identified as having learning difficulties. This is above the national average. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are few pupils from ethnic minority groups but three are at the early stages of learning English. The school offers before and after school care.

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 provides sound value for money. The committed leadership of the headteacher has resulted in the successful opening of the school and the identification of a clear plan for its development. There is a good team spirit and the determination to do well. One parent wrote, 'I think it's a lovely school, although I was concerned when it first merged, it has turned out to be for the best.'

Many pupils, in all year groups, started the new school with below average standards. Standards are now broadly average and are rising because the quality of teaching throughout the school is improving and pupils have a good attitude to learning. Overall, teaching, achievement and standards are satisfactory. Provision for children in the Nursery and the Reception class is good. They achieve well and many meet the expected levels in knowledge, skills and understanding by the end of the Foundation Stage. Whilst there is evidence of good teaching in Years 1 - 6, this is not consistently the case in all classes. Strengths in the quality of teaching include good relationships, good subject knowledge and good use of questioning but, in too many lessons, pupils are unclear about the purpose of their work, targets are imprecise and they are given insufficient guidance on how to make better progress. Standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly average overall but are not high enough in writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress in relation to their targets because they receive good support.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the school's leadership places a high priority on this area. Pupils make a positive contribution to their own school community through the school council, and to the wider community through raising money for charity. One pupil said, 'It makes you feel important'. Most pupils are well-behaved and enjoy school. Attendance is satisfactory. Skills to equip pupils for their future lives are being developed appropriately.

Pupils are well cared for and all required child protection procedures are in place. Many pupils attend the good quality before and after school provision. This contributes significantly to their personal development and well-being. However, care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall because assessment procedures are insufficiently well developed and pupils do not get enough guidance on improving their work. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is well structured but is not sufficiently well designed to allow all pupils to achieve as well as they could, particularly in writing and mathematics. The curriculum encourages the majority of pupils to live a safe and healthy lifestyle well. Extra-curricular activities and visits are good and contribute much to pupils' enjoyment of learning.

The school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory. Subject leaders and senior managers are developing their roles in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, but their work has not yet had a full impact on standards and achievement. Areas for improvements have been correctly identified but the school's own evaluations tend to be generous because there is a lack of rigour in analysing assessment information and the quality of teaching and learning. The school development plan lacks clear targets for success. Governors are supportive of the school and have established effective committee structures to oversee its development but governors do not provide enough well informed challenge to the school's leadership or exert sufficient direction over its programme for improvement. Overall, leadership and management are sound.

What the school should do to improve further

- Clarify pupils' targets and improve the quality of teachers' marking so that pupils are clear about what they have to do to improve.
- Undertake a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and the standards that pupils achieve.
- Make better use of the information gained from tracking pupils' progress to help raise standards, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure the criteria for measuring the school's progress are clear.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the end of the Foundation Stage, many children attain the nationally expected levels. They do particularly well in developing their social and emotional skills. In the 2006 national assessments, standards in Year 2 were below average in reading and writing and well below in mathematics. Standards in Year 6 were above average in reading but below in writing. Overall, they were broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Girls did not attain the same level as girls nationally but, like the boys, made satisfactory progress from the end of Year 2. Improvements to the quality of teaching and the curriculum are beginning to quicken pupils' progress so that in the current Year 2, standards in mathematics and reading are much nearer national expectations. Standards in writing remain comparatively weak. Standards in Year 6 are similar to those reflected in the results in 2006. The performance of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly similar to this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop good relationships with each other and work and play together well. Older pupils care for those that are younger by acting as 'playleaders' or reading books to them. Pupils have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and eating a balanced diet. Many are keen to take up opportunities to raise their fitness levels by attending after school clubs and they know the importance of keeping themselves safe. They know bullying is wrong and understand what to do if they see, or experience, unacceptable behaviour. Pupils contribute to the school community through the school council where views are sought and changes made. They also make good contributions to the wider community by raising funds for charities and representing the school in sporting and musical events. Pupils' good social skills and satisfactory progress make a sound contribution to their future economic well-being. Most enjoy school but attendance is only satisfactory because a few families do not get their children to school regularly and on time, despite much encouragement by staff.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved over the last year and there are now more good lessons. Good features include the effective relationships between staff and pupils which are used to create a good atmosphere in which pupils enjoy learning. The skills of teaching assistants are used well so that their good support enhances pupils' involvement in their learning and

encourages better progress. Usually, a good range of teaching methods and learning resources are used, including interactive whiteboards. In most lessons, teachers' good use of questioning develops pupils' thinking and helps teachers assess their understanding. Teaching is only satisfactory overall, however, because staff make insufficient use of the information they gain from assessing pupils' work to set activities with clear, focussed objectives. Pupils' targets are sometimes too broad and they are not given enough support to know how to achieve them. Teachers' marking rarely makes reference to their targets or clearly identifies what pupils need to do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides its pupils with a programme for learning that is broad, balanced and gives suitable emphasis to different subjects and the development of skills. Appropriate emphasis is now being placed on developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy but this has not yet resulted in significant improvements in standards. Information and communication technology (ICT) and music have a high profile within the school and contribute significantly to pupils' learning and their spiritual and cultural development. The programme for extending pupils' personal, social and health education is good. In the Foundation Stage there is a strong focus on children's personal development which lays a good foundation for future learning. The curriculum is enhanced effectively by the good range of well-attended before and after school clubs. There are also many trips to places of interest, including a residential experience for Year 6 pupils. Several visitors are invited into the school to broaden the pupils' views of community issues. This is rightly to be extended to enhance their understanding of multicultural issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are secure arrangements for child protection. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly, and all staff are made aware of their responsibility to ensure high levels of health and safety. There are good strategies for dealing with any instances of inappropriate behaviour. Staff know the pupils well and the school has begun to develop a system to check on how much progress pupils make in English and mathematics. However, pupils receive insufficient guidance on exactly what they should do to reach the next stages in their learning. Children who find learning hard are well cared for and generally achieve as well as they should because an able team of teaching assistants works closely with the special needs co-ordinator and class teachers. Good partnerships with external agencies also help to ensure that these pupils make sound progress. Most parents feel that the school consults them and acts upon their views. Regular opportunities are provided for them to meet the staff and to receive newsletters and progress reports.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior leaders have created a strong team and have gained the commitment of all staff to providing pupils with a good education. This is already leading to improvements in teaching, the curriculum, provision for extra-curricular activities, including educational visits, and the breakfast club. The impact is also beginning to be seen in the better progress pupils are making and in their attitude to school. Subject leaders are developing their roles satisfactorily. They are starting to monitor the quality of provision in their subjects and contribute to the

development of the school. The school has correctly identified the main areas for improvement and these have been included in the detailed school development plan. However, the criteria by which the school currently evaluates its progress are imprecise and insufficient use is made of assessment information. Governors have rightly focused on the opening and establishing of the new school. They have set reasonably challenging statutory targets but they have not challenged the school sufficiently about the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve.

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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
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

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.

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 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

14 March 2007

Dear Pupils,

Alban Wood Primary and Nursery School, The Brow Watford. Hertfordshire WD25 7NX.

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. Looking at your books and talking to you about your work and your school helped us a lot in coming to our inspection findings. We think you are very lucky to have such a nice school to go to, especially with the opportunities to attend the breakfast and the after school clubs. We were very pleased to hear that you like coming to school and enjoy the different activities. We enjoyed listening to you playing the Samba drums and the other instruments.

We think your school has done a lot in the short time it has been open and is giving you a satisfactory quality of education. A lot of time has been spent in setting up the new school, developing your playground and ensuring you have lots of play and learning equipment. Your teachers are working hard to make certain you are safe and help you make progress. We can see improvements in your work already. The biggest improvement has been made in your personal development. The way in which you all have got together in your new school is really good, especially the way in which the older pupils help the younger ones. Your behaviour is good and you are developing a good understanding of healthy living and staying safe. Well done.

We think, however, that you could reach even higher standards especially in writing and mathematics. We have asked your teachers to make certain you are clear about your targets and you know what you need to do next to improve. When they watch each other teach and look at your work, we have asked them to be really strict and ask 'Are the teaching and your work good enough and what would make it better?' We have also asked that the information your teachers have on your standards and progress is used more effectively to help the school set clear targets for its improvement.

Once again, thank you for making our visit enjoyable.

Best wishes to all the pupils at Alban Wood Primary and Nursery School.

David Wynford Jones

Lead inspector.