

# Amington Heath Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124176
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	298585
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Sims

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	184
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Martin Jenkins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Mason
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Quince Amington Tamworth B77 4EN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01827 475161
<b>Fax number</b>	01827 475161

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Amington Heath Community School is slightly smaller than most primary schools. It has a maintained Nursery, which children attend either in the morning or in the afternoon. The school serves a community with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and of those with learning difficulties and disabilities are above average. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The school has been through a difficult period since it was judged to require special measures in 2003 and was given a notice to improve at its last inspection in June 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The last 12 months have seen significant improvement at Amington Heath as a result of the headteacher's good leadership, the intensive support provided by the local authority, and the teachers' increasing willingness to take on board new ideas and work together as a team. As a result, the school's overall effectiveness, the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum, and the overall quality of leadership and management are now all satisfactory, and elements of good practice are already evident.

Despite the improvements this year, many years of underachievement have resulted in exceptionally low standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Pupils' writing and speaking skills are particularly weak. However, because pupils of all abilities and in all classes are making significantly better progress than before, their achievement is now satisfactory and standards are improving. This is because the quality of teaching has improved. Teachers have a much clearer understanding of what their pupils need to learn than previously and have become more accountable for the progress made within their class. The teaching is particularly good in the Nursery and in Year 6, and imaginative teaching methods are being implemented successfully in some other classes. However, the quality of the teaching is not yet entirely consistent, and there are still occasions when teachers do not have high enough expectations of what all of the pupils are capable of achieving and the work is not matched sufficiently well to pupils' different needs.

The curriculum has also improved. For example, the introduction of 'Wonderful Wednesdays' for pupils up to Year 2 and 'Fantastic Fridays' for pupils in Years 3 to 6 has brought greater creativity to the classroom, improved the motivation of both pupils and teachers, and resulted in some good work. More systematic teaching of letter sounds for the school's youngest children is providing an effective starting point for developing their writing skills, but not enough has been done elsewhere to improve the accuracy of pupils' writing or their ability to express themselves. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but teachers do not give enough indication of where pupils could improve their work or where they have made mistakes.

The school provides good care, support and guidance, which enables children in Nursery and Reception to adapt well to school life and provides a wide range of initiatives to help those with learning or social difficulties. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The great majority of pupils behave well most of the time and show satisfactory attitudes towards their work.

The headteacher has given the school a clear sense of direction and a renewed sense of purpose. She has an accurate understanding of what works well and what needs to be improved and has shown a determination to move the school forward. Staff are now firmly behind the drive to raise standards and parents are becoming more involved in the life of the school. Subject leaders now have a clearer understanding of what is required of them and have overseen the implementation of changes suggested by external consultants. However, they have yet to prove their ability to keep an accurate check on what is happening and to formulate plans of their own to bring further improvement. Nevertheless, the changes that have taken place this year indicate that there is satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science, giving particular attention to the development of pupils' writing and speaking skills.
- Ensure that the teaching in all classes is of a consistently high quality and that teachers provide work which is sufficiently challenging to enable all pupils to catch up lost ground.
- Develop the skills of those who have leadership responsibilities in monitoring, evaluating and leading new initiatives so that they can provide effective leadership without the need for external support.

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

Pupils of all abilities and in all year groups have made significantly better progress this year than in the past and are now achieving satisfactorily. However, this better rate of progress has not been happening for long enough to make up for many years of underachievement. Standards are still well below average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and exceptionally low in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.

Children make good progress in the Nursery and satisfactory progress in Reception. Many children now reach the goals expected for their age by the start of Year 1 in most areas of learning. Progress in their personal, social and emotional development is particularly good. Standards in communication, language and literacy are still below the expected level, although all children are making better progress than before now that there is systematic teaching of letter sounds.

Throughout the rest of the school, pupils' speaking and writing skills are weak. Pupils have developed their understanding of different writing styles well this year, but their writing is inaccurate and their ability to express themselves, both orally and in writing, is poor. Pupils also find it hard to apply their mathematical understanding to problem solving. The school has rightly identified these aspects as priorities for development.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Most pupils like coming to school and particularly enjoy discovery days which engage them in practical, hands-on activities. Their attitudes towards their day-to-day lessons vary, but most participate well in lessons. The level of attendance is just below the national average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. A small minority of pupils exhibit more challenging behaviour, although the school has good strategies for dealing with this. Pupils show an informed awareness of their own cultural traditions and a sound awareness of others.

Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of diet, water and exercise in leading a healthy lifestyle. Because there is very little bullying and relationships with staff are good, pupils feel safe in school. They have a sound awareness of how to keep themselves safe, although the number of minor accidents at break and lunchtime indicates they do not always put this understanding into practice. A range of responsibilities for older pupils, the work of the school

council and raising funds for charity enable pupils to make a positive contribution to the school and wider community. Through involvement in a mini-enterprise project, pupils in Year 6 develop their awareness of the world of work through market research, data analysis, selling products and keeping accounts.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of the teaching has improved over the last year. This has enabled pupils in all classes to make at least satisfactory, and often good, progress in their learning. The teaching is good in the Nursery and Year 6 and there are elements of good practice in other year groups. However, there are still some inconsistencies. Staff are becoming more adventurous in their teaching, using a wider variety of methods which engage pupils and motivate them to learn. Some staff, however, keep pupils sitting and listening for far too long. Techniques such as 'talking partners' ensure that all pupils are actively engaged in discussion, but teachers do not intervene enough to help pupils improve their speaking skills. Teachers have a much better awareness of the standards at which the pupils are working, but they do not always take sufficient note of this information to plan sufficiently challenging work which will help pupils to make more rapid progress.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school has responded well to the criticisms of the curriculum in the previous inspection report. Together with the monthly discovery days, the introduction of 'Wonderful Wednesdays' and 'Fantastic Fridays' has enlivened the curriculum and motivated both staff and pupils. The cross-curricular approach to learning on these days is successful, developing a range of skills and pointing to ways in which the more formal curriculum during the rest of the week can be improved. There has been a good emphasis on developing the range of pupils' writing throughout the school. Improvements have been made to the scheme for teaching children letter sounds in Nursery and Reception. However, not enough has been done to improve the accuracy of pupils' writing in the rest of the school, and insufficient attention is given to this aspect when marking pupils' work. Good provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education helps pupils to stay healthy and safe. There is a good range of enrichment activities, including educational visits, visitors, musical and sporting activities.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Staff know the pupils well and provide good guidance for their personal development. Children settle quickly in the Nursery because of the effective induction programme. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well and there are good links with outside agencies that help them learn well. Good support is provided for pupils with low self esteem and those with behavioural difficulties. The school has worked hard and successfully to develop better links with parents and the community. A recent family learning weekend, for example, offered children and their parents the chance to work and enjoy time together. Parents are appreciative of the work of the school.

Child protection arrangements meet requirements and risk assessments are carried out rigorously for activities in school and for off-site visits. Arrangements to support pupils' academic progress are satisfactory and improving. Assessment systems are detailed and robust and, as a result, any underachievement is quickly identified. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but pupils are not given enough feedback about how they can improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher provides good leadership and has been the driving force behind the school's improvement this year. She has a clear vision for the future of the school and a good understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be developed. One of the most significant achievements has been an improvement in staff morale which has led to a greater sense of purpose, a better understanding of what the school is about, and a genuine sense of teamwork which had previously been lacking. Improvements in the way the school tracks pupils' progress, changes to the curriculum, and more interesting teaching are all starting to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

The school has had a significant amount of external support over the last few years. This has helped to develop rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' work. The evaluation of these activities has resulted in detailed development plans that have been instrumental in bringing improvement. These activities have also helped staff to develop an understanding of what is required of them as subject leaders and managers. However, those with leadership and management responsibilities have not yet been given the opportunity to show that they can put this understanding into practice without external support and thus prove that the school is now capable of standing on its own feet. Governors have been supportive through this period of change and are developing their ability to ask the right questions, hold the school to account, and ensure that the school continues on its road to improvement.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	3
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	2
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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

9 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Amington Heath Community School, Tamworth B77 4EN

My colleague and I enjoyed our recent visit to your school and would like to thank you for your welcome and for talking to us. Your school has improved a great deal over the last year and is now providing you with a satisfactory education. These are our main findings.

- You have made better progress in your work this year, although many of you have a lot of ground to make up to reach similar standards to pupils in other schools.
- Your writing is improving, but many of you need to improve your spelling and the way you express yourself, both when writing and when speaking.
- Most of you enjoy school, behave well, and try hard at your work.
- Teaching has improved this year and is now at least satisfactory; some lessons are really interesting, but some do not challenge you enough.
- Discovery days, 'Wonderful Wednesdays' and 'Fantastic Fridays' really help you to learn and enjoy school.
- The staff take good care of you, particularly those of you who have problems or who need extra help with your work.
- The headteacher has worked hard to bring improvements and make the school function well, and she is now receiving good support from governors and staff.

In order to help the school become even better, we have asked the staff to:

- help you improve the standards you reach in English, mathematics and science and give particular attention to developing your writing and speaking skills
- ensure that the teaching you receive is of a consistently good quality and is sufficiently challenging to help you make up lost ground.

We have also asked the governors and headteacher to help staff develop their expertise as leaders so that they can carry out their responsibilities well.

You can help make Amington Heath even better by trying your hardest in your work. We wish each one of you every success and happiness in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Graham Sims Lead Inspector