

Alma Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102012
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	307874
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

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	469
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nadia Conway
Headteacher	Mrs Janice Feavearyear (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Alma Road Ponders End Enfield EN3 4UQ
Telephone number	020 8804 3302
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves a community of high deprivation. Almost half the pupils receive free school meals. Over a third of the pupils join or leave the school after the Reception Year. Four-fifths of the school population are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A quarter of these are in the early stages of learning English, with Turkish, Sylhetti and Somali being the most predominant home languages. There are twenty-four pupils from families who are refugees or asylum seekers. A quarter of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, well above average, and attainment on entry to the nursery is low. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award, the Leading Parents Partnership Award and Investors in People. The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post since the previous headteacher left in April 2007. The school has nursery provision but children have not yet started school this year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This inclusive school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. There is good provision for pupils with English as an additional language or learning difficulties or disabilities and the school makes good use of outside agencies when additional support is needed. Links with parents are particularly effective with initiatives such as the 'Dads and Lads' programme to help parents and carers to support their children's learning.

Pupils from Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress from their generally low starting points. However, because teachers make limited use of assessment data to identify and respond to any underachievement, few pupils attain the higher levels in the national tests for seven and eleven-year-olds. Pupils enjoy school, have good attitudes to their work, take responsibilities seriously and behave well towards adults and each other. Teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and manage the few pupils with behavioural difficulties well. Good questioning and on the spot response to pupils' immediate needs by teachers and teaching assistants ensure that learning is satisfactory, and often good, in lessons.

The curriculum for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is satisfactory but is not designed well enough in mathematics to ensure pupils attain their full potential. The good range of additional activities, including sport and music, enrich pupils' experiences. Good pastoral care, guidance and support enable pupils to feel safe and secure in school. Attendance has improved because of the rigorous monitoring systems. Academic guidance is satisfactory overall but there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking. Pupils have group targets for improvement but these are rarely linked to their specific learning needs.

The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have been successful in maintaining high staff morale and are not resting on their laurels in leading the school forward. They know the school's strengths and have identified where improvements are needed. The staff and leadership team have been reorganised to target areas needing support. An experienced team leader, for example, now supports Years 3 and 4 where there had been a dip in pupils' achievements. Leaders are beginning to put in place arrangements for more robust monitoring. This provides a sound foundation for future improvements to the teaching.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

At the time of the last inspection there were weaknesses in the provision for the Foundation Stage. Very effective leadership has turned this around and the school now provides children with a good start to their education. Many children have very little English language and have had few opportunities to play outside before joining the three nursery classes. The staff do their best to give nursery children access to the high quality outdoor activity area available for the reception children. Home visits were taking place during the inspection and no nursery children were in school but records clearly show the good progress these children make. Well-planned activities carefully matched to children's needs and a lively and stimulating environment enable children in the reception classes to continue to make swift gains in confidence and learning. This has resulted in many children attaining appropriate skills for their age in all areas of learning apart from communication, language and literacy by the time they leave the Foundation Stage. However, there is some lack of continuity between the Foundation Stage and Year 1, where independent activities are less focused on extending specific skills

than in the Foundation Stage. The effective assessment systems and monitoring of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is providing a model for development across the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers make good use of assessment data to plan challenging tasks that enable all pupils to achieve their full potential.
- Improve planning and assessment in mathematics to improve standards and ensure that all pupils reach their potential.
- Put in place robust systems for monitoring teaching and learning and sharing good practice.

A small proportion of 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

The school population changes significantly from year to year. In 2007, high mobility, with well over half the pupils in Year 6 having joined the school after Year 2, resulted in lower than usual standards in English, mathematics and science. However, assessments and the school's accurate records show that pupils made satisfactory progress given their starting points. Most pupils now in Year 2 and Year 6 are working at levels close to the national average but there are few working at the higher levels because the school has not been using assessment to set aspirational targets for pupils. Achievement overall is satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils with English as an additional language or learning difficulties or disabilities progress as well as their peers because they have good support. Standards in mathematics are not as good as in English because of weaknesses in assessment and planning in mathematics that do not identify dips in pupils' progress or gaps in their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are well mannered and friendly towards visitors and keen to praise their school. A minority of parents expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour, although during lessons and around the school, inspectors found behaviour to be good overall. Pupils are encouraged to express their feelings, through for example, the innovative 'Place2Be' scheme, a counselling service which takes place at the school on a self-referral basis. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Pupils get on well with each other, develop good relationships with peers and staff, and have respect for the wide range of cultures represented in the school.

Pupils take regular physical exercise and show they have a clear understanding of how to eat healthily and stay safe, taking on board the message about washing hands. One pupil commented, 'The school is a nice environment where I feel safe'. The school council is enthusiastic and meets regularly with the senior management in order to be involved in decision-making about facilities and resources. As a result, the school now has water fountains in corridors. Pupils are developing satisfactory skills to prepare them for their futures and use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well throughout the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and pupils are eager to learn and attentive. Some teachers give pupils useful written guidance when marking work, advising them on how to improve. This practice is not consistent throughout the school. Pupils with specific needs receive good support, enabling them to achieve as well as their peers. Often teachers make learning fun, giving pupils opportunities for discussion or drama. In one lesson, 'Gerry Springer' chaired an interview for an additional character in Harry Potter's circle of friends, taking questions from the class to select the best candidate. Teachers plan the content of their lessons thoroughly but their planning is not always sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of their pupils' different abilities, especially the most able. This is because there is insufficient use of assessment data to track progress and set targets, especially in mathematics. The frequent use of whiteboards, where work is instantly erased, prevents pupils and teachers identifying and responding to misunderstandings or celebrating achievements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The planning for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science reflects the national guidance. Pupils have more opportunities to use writing and ICT skills across the curriculum than at the time of the last inspection. Year 2, for example, have completed book reviews on-line. There is limited tracking of pupils' progress in mathematics and teachers are unable to adapt the curriculum to fully meet pupils' needs. The school is aware of weaknesses in the transition between the Foundation Stage and Year 1 and is beginning to adjust the curriculum to address this. There is no specific provision for more able pupils but pupils with English as an additional language, learning difficulties or disabilities are well provided for.

The curriculum is enriched by local visits and visits to more distant locations such as Southend-on-Sea. Cultural visits, including African drummers and the Bali Dancing workshop, make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good and a strength of the school. Pupils for whom English is an additional language, and those with learning difficulties and disabilities, receive good support, enabling them to make satisfactory progress. Despite a minority of parents feeling otherwise, pupils report that they feel safe at school. There are secure arrangements for ensuring pupils' health and safety and for safeguarding pupils. Issues such as bullying and friendships are addressed well in assemblies and circle time. Academic guidance is thorough in pupils' progress books, but is variable in pupils' exercise books, some of which contain little more than ticks or praise. Nevertheless, pupils report that they know their English and mathematics targets. Although systems for assessment data and tracking pupil progress are mostly satisfactory, teachers do not always use the information well enough to support, challenge or guide individual pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher has developed an effective leadership team and deployed teachers to make the best use of their strengths. Her vision for the school has ensured that all staff are working together to review present practices. Based on the successful management of the Foundation Stage, other team leaders are beginning to monitor performance and evaluate teaching and learning. They have been set the challenge to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to raise pupils' achievement. Plans are in place to set teachers targets for the performance of their pupils as part of their professional development.

The school has relevant plans for improvement securely based on an accurate evaluation of the school's needs. These provide a secure basis for future development. Much has been achieved in the term since the appointment of the leadership team. An analysis of teachers' assessments, for example, showed some inaccuracies and they are taking action to address this. The present tracking and assessment procedures are not refined enough to pinpoint individual pupils who may not be achieving as well as they could.

The Governors are very involved in the life of the school and have made a good start in developing the way they act as 'critical friends' with support from the Local Authority.

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alma Primary School, Enfield, EN3 4UQ

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school. We were very impressed with your smiling faces, good behaviour and the way you worked so hard in your lessons. Well done. A special thanks to the school council who talked to an inspector and those of you who brought some of your last term's work from home to show him.

You told us that you enjoy school, people are friendly, your teachers are kind and that you feel safe. We all felt that your school is a friendly and happy place to be and we know that your teachers take good care of you. Those of you who need extra help sometimes or who are learning to speak English have plenty of help. The youngest children amongst you are given a good start to your time in school so you have plenty of fun while you learn lots of new things.

We know you are making satisfactory progress but have asked your teachers to make sure that they know exactly what you can do so that they can set you challenging work. This will help you learn even faster. We want your teachers to look carefully at your work to find out what mathematics you are good at and in what areas you will need extra help with in lessons. They can then plan lessons that are just what you need. You have some good teachers in your school. Your headteacher and other leaders have been asked to look at the work of all teachers and to help them make sure that you all learn as well as you can.

Your headteacher and deputy headteacher have made sure that your school continues to be a happy and hardworking place since they took charge in April. I am sure you will relish the challenge of work at just the level you need to enable you to make really good progress.

Best wishes

Mrs J Dawson

Lead Inspector