

King Athelstan Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102579
Local Authority	Kingston Upon Thames
Inspection number	308055
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Chisnall HMI

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	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms J Foster
Headteacher	Ms E Newton
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2003
School address	Villiers Road Kingston Upon Thames KT1 3AR
Telephone number	020 8546 8210
Fax number	020 8547 2732

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

King Athelstan is a larger than average primary school that is growing in size. It has a 52-place nursery class. Attainment on entry to the school is much lower than expected for pupils' ages, although the full range of ability is represented. Almost half its pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is a much higher proportion than found nationally. Just over 60% are from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages; half of these are Asian or Black African pupils. A very high proportion of pupils speaks English as an additional language, and many of these are at an early stage of language acquisition. The number of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability is above average. The school experiences considerable pupil turnover, with many joining and leaving at different times of the year. In addition, staff turnover at all levels has been high. The school has gained the Healthy Schools and Active Mark awards and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

King Athelstan is improving rapidly under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, and provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. Since the last inspection, the school has undergone significant changes of senior leaders and teaching staff. This situation has now stabilised; the school is settled and has quickly gained the confidence of parents and carers. As one parent wrote about her experience, 'Right from the start we found it to be an inspiring school, and still do.'

At the heart of this positive picture is the strong educational direction provided by the recently appointed headteacher, very well supported by the senior leadership team. Between them, they have accurately identified where the school's strengths and weaknesses lie, set targets for improvements and established procedures for checking up on how well pupils and staff are working. There is still more to be done in enabling middle leaders, such as subject co-ordinators, to play their part in raising pupils' achievements. Nevertheless, the school is well placed to bring about further improvements to its work.

The biggest challenge facing the school is to close the gap between the standards its pupils reach, which are below average, and those found nationally. Many pupils have much lower starting points than usual and the turnover of pupils is very high. These factors add to the challenge. However, the gap is beginning to close, particularly in English. Nevertheless, some boys are doing far less well than girls and their progress is not yet fast enough to catch up. It is clear that those pupils who join the school in Reception and stay to Year 6 do best of all and progress well.

There are several factors that are bringing about this improvement. The curriculum has been revised to thread literacy skills through different subjects. It is enriched by visits and after-school clubs to cater for individual interests. More could still be done to cater for those pupils who have special gifts or talents. Support for pupils who are vulnerable is well-organised and tailored to meet their needs well. Staff have set targets for pupils and ensured that 'working walls' are a consistent feature in classrooms. As a result, pupils know what they have to do to improve their work. Some teaching is of a good or high standard, but this is not consistently the case across the school. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2, it is more consistently satisfactory. Senior leaders know exactly where improvements need to be made to improve pupils' progress still further and are active in supporting staff, many of whom are new to the school.

Pupils are happy in school and this is helping them to learn. Most pupils behave very well and the school has effective strategies to support the few who do not. Relationships within the school are strong, and parents and carers recognise the good quality care and guidance for pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe, well looked after and are happy young citizens. Their education is enhanced very well by the links the school has with outside agencies, such as those from the local authority and local businesses.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage is providing children with a satisfactory start to their education. Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are much lower than expected for their ages, especially in social and language skills. Relationships are strong and children quickly gain confidence, settle to routines and feel safe. They work and play happily alongside each other.

This is because adults provide plenty of support and encourage them to try new things. Links with home are strong.

There have been recent changes to the leadership of the Foundation Stage. The support of the local authority, alongside that from the senior team, is enabling provision to be satisfactory. However, marked improvement is required if children are to make better progress and achieve the standards expected for their ages. The most important one is to secure the long-term leadership of the Foundation Stage in order to establish a high quality learning environment. The quality of teaching, although largely satisfactory, is not strong enough to promote children's rapid progress, particularly in the areas of communication, language and literacy, and creative development. The outdoor environment remains an area for significant improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage so that children make better progress, particularly in the area of literacy and language.
- Raise the achievement of boys, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Raise the standard of teaching so that more is of a consistently high quality in each key stage.
- Develop the role of middle managers so that there is a consistent focus on raising achievement still further.

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

From low starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress and reach standards that remain below average, but are improving. This is because of concerted action taken by staff to help pupils learn at a faster rate; there are clear signs of success and the school is on track to reach the challenging targets it has set for pupils. Pupils are now making good progress in English; last year, more of them reached the higher levels of attainment than in most schools nationally. This is as a result of a whole school focus on teaching phonics and in the promotion of literacy skills in the wider curriculum. Progress in mathematics and science is not as strong.

Many pupils join the school at different times of the year and some of them have attended several schools. They do not make as much progress as those who have been settled at the school for several years; these pupils make good progress. Although boys make largely satisfactory progress, not enough of them are reaching expected levels in basic literacy and numeracy skills. This is because many of them have more ground to make up from their starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well to make expected progress, as are those with English as an additional language. The school's assessment records show that pupils' progress is picking up and on the way to closing the gap with national results. Overall, pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation stage helps the youngest children to learn how to work with others and take turns. In the school as a whole, most pupils enjoy school and relationships are good.

According to one parent, 'The staff had a huge impact on my children, which I am convinced will set them on their way to being caring, considerate and respectable children.' Pupils behave well in lessons in and around the school and appreciate the 'buddy' system. They have good personal development, know the rules and usually follow them. However, a few show challenging behaviour, but this is well managed by the school. Pupils commented that the teachers are friendly and no-one shouts at them.

Pupils like taking responsibility, as shown by their participation in the appointment of the headteacher, the decoration of the toilets and in the new catering arrangements. They select healthy foods and the high quality school lunches contribute much to this. Pupils respect each other and know how to stay safe. Attendance has improved and is close to the national average. However, the rate of unauthorised absence is higher than average, due to a small number of extended term-time holidays. Pupils work enthusiastically towards winning the punctuality bear and certificates for attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is some good and outstanding teaching, but not enough of it is of the high quality needed to improve progress and raise standards for all pupils. Senior leaders are aware of this and provide staff with effective support that is leading to some improvement. Teaching is more consistently good in Key Stage 1, and physical education is especially well taught. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. They know and get on very well with pupils, inspiring confidence and enjoyment. Although pupils enjoy their lessons, they do not always find them demanding enough; more could be done in some classes to stretch the most able pupils. Sometimes, the introductions to lessons are too long, which leaves little time for pupils to work independently.

Lessons are well structured and teachers clarify what pupils are to learn from the outset. This enables pupils, to an increasing extent, to reflect on their own progress. Because the working atmosphere in classrooms is so positive, they are not afraid to ask for help when stuck. Pupils make good progress when lesson planning accurately builds upon what pupils already know. Marking is generally of a high standard and helps pupils see where they can improve their work. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These pupils are well supported, and benefit from a wide range of additional learning programmes in reading and writing that are geared towards building their confidence.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum captures pupils' interest and meets their varying needs well. The recent introduction of a 'themed' curriculum is beginning to improve learning. Pupils delight in being able to study French for the first time. In the Foundation Stage, there is a good balance of adult and child led activities, which meets the needs of children well.

Good use of information and communication technology adds an exciting dimension to many subjects. A well-equipped computer suite, interactive whiteboards, laptops, digital cameras and microscopes further enhance the curriculum. There is a wide range of enrichment activities, including trips and residential visits. The pupils participate fully and talk enthusiastically about

how they enjoy sport, cooking, art and musical activities. There is considerable emphasis given to healthy lifestyles within the curriculum and this contributes to the pupils' secure understanding of such issues. The breakfast club adds to this dimension and provides opportunities for pupils to socialise. This is especially helpful to pupils who join the school at different times of the year and for those who need to practise their language skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care at the school is good, supported by good relationships with external agencies. This is especially apparent for pupils who may be vulnerable, such as those with English as an additional language. One parent noted, 'My child is happy in experiencing a multi-cultural environment which is welcoming and inclusive.' Pupils value the kind, caring and happy working ethos and have clear targets for improvement. Pupils' academic progress is carefully tracked in order to identify those at risk of falling behind and support provided. Pupils' work is marked regularly, giving clear guidance on how they might improve. Arrangements for health and safety, and current safeguarding procedures, are in place and promote a safe and supportive learning environment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

While the overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, there are some significant strengths that are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. The most important one of these is the first-rate leadership of the headteacher and the senior leadership team. In a relatively short time, they have rigorously evaluated where improvements are needed. There is a relentless focus on improving classroom practice through regular observation and guidance for teachers, many of whom are relatively new to the school.

The senior team, with the support of staff and governors, have established clear targets through the school improvement plan. It is well organised but the ways to check its success are not sufficiently focused on the expected outcomes for pupils and their learning. The role of other leaders in the school, such as subject co-ordinators and phase leaders, is not well developed; these staff have not yet had enough opportunities to make accurate judgements about the impact of what they do on pupils' learning and well-being. Many of the initiatives for improvement are relatively new and have not had time to impact fully on pupils' achievements.

Governors support the school well and provide appropriate levels of challenge to the senior team. They are not sufficiently involved in the systematic evaluation of how well the school is doing in relation to its key targets. The budget is well managed and the small deficit is set to be removed by 2009. Given the progress pupils make and the standards they reach, value for money is satisfactory.

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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
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of King Athelstan Primary School, Kingston Upon Thames, KT1 3AR

Thank you very much for welcoming the inspection to your school. We really enjoyed our visit and especially valued the opportunities we had to talk with some of you and to hear your views. In return, I want to tell you what we thought of your school.

- King Athelstan is giving you a satisfactory education but one that is improving rapidly.
- Most of you behave well and are polite and friendly; you like to take responsibility and make your voices heard by staff. We were especially impressed by the way in which some of you have helped in staff appointments and the arrangements for school dinners.
- The curriculum is good because it provides you with interesting things to learn, such as French, and the opportunities to take part in clubs and other activities. The themes you follow help you to see the links between different subjects, especially literacy.
- The staff look after you well and make sure you are safe. They provide extra help for those of you who need it and help all of you to see what you have to do to improve your work. Your parents and carers recognise this as a special strength of the school.
- Your school is very well led by the headteacher and other senior staff who check how well you are doing and make plans to help you get better still, for instance in English where many of you get good results.

We have asked the staff to make sure that children get the best possible start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes. There are some good and outstanding lessons in the school, but we would like to see that all of you have lessons like these on a regular basis. While many of you are making good progress in your work, some boys are lagging behind, especially in English and maths. We have asked staff to look at ways of helping them to catch up. Perhaps you have some ideas about this that you can share? Finally, we are suggesting that staff look more closely at what you are learning when they make plans for helping you improve.

The inspectors join me in sending you best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Chisnall

Her Majesty's Inspector