

Acacias Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105401
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	308848
Inspection date	23 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Colin Smith

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	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr John Commons
Headteacher	Mr Philip Webster
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2004
School address	Alexandra Drive Burnage Manchester Lancashire M19 2WW
Telephone number	0161 2241598
Fax number	0161 2486742

Age group	3-11
Inspection date	23 April 2008
Inspection number	308848

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The following issues were investigated: pupils' achievement, particularly in writing; the impact of teaching and additional support upon pupils' learning and personal development; and the extent to which leaders check the work of the school to raise standards. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, pupils' work, discussions with staff, governors and pupils and a scrutiny of school documents and questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average in size. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Approximately half of the pupils are of Pakistani heritage and a quarter are of White British heritage. There are several other minority groups and ten different nationalities in all. Over half of the pupils in school speak English as an additional language and the proportion is increasing. Almost 10% are at an early stage of learning English. Many of these children are in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school buildings are outdated but a new building is soon to be provided.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The quality of education and value for money provided by Acacias Primary School are good. At the heart of the school's work lies the excellent level of care, guidance and support provided, particularly for vulnerable pupils and those with language or learning difficulties. The school has forged exceptionally good links with parents, and health and education professionals to ensure that pupils are safeguarded and any barriers to learning are removed successfully. This is a major factor in pupils' good achievement and outstanding personal development. Pupils acquire a good grasp of the importance of safe and healthy lifestyles. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, behaviour and sense of social responsibility are exemplary. The good curriculum provided, with its diversity of additional activities, creates enjoyment in learning. Attendance is good. Pupil's views of the school are extremely positive. They say, 'The only thing we want to change is the limited space in classrooms.' Parents are highly satisfied. Comments such as, 'Children achieve well because they are safe and happy in school,' typify parent's views.

Pupils achieve well overall. Following a satisfactory start in the Foundation Stage, achievement accelerates in Key Stage 1. This enables most pupils to reach average standards in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2, although standards in writing are still below average. Pupils' achievement from Year 3 onwards is particularly good in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in English, mathematics and science are all above average by the end of Year 6. Boys and girls from all of the different ethnic groups achieve well. Pupils from Pakistani backgrounds, often with English as an additional language, make particularly good progress because their language needs are so well provided for. Pupils who receive learning support make good progress in response to the challenging targets set for them. Pupils' overall achievement in writing is satisfactory. The measures put into place to improve pupils' understanding of punctuation and to encourage them to use more descriptive vocabulary are paying dividends but a minority of pupils struggle to write with fluency and imagination.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Lessons are managed extremely well. Consequently, pupils are attentive and always try hard to produce good quality work in their books. Teachers question pupils skilfully to extend their understanding and improve their spoken language, for example, by asking them to explain their mathematical calculations. In Key Stage 1 and 2, a good variety of methods are used to make learning interesting. For example, in information and communication technology (ICT) pupils are asked to spot deliberate mistakes in spreadsheets. Such approaches make learning fun. There are examples of outstanding teaching in Year 2 where pupils become totally absorbed in their science investigations and in Year 6 where pupils are developing a unique talent for assessing their own learning. This is because target-setting and marking of their work are so advanced. These techniques are gradually extending to other classes. The assessment of pupils' learning is good in most subjects. The information gathered is used effectively to provide challenging activities that are well matched to pupils' different needs, an important factor in their good achievement. However, pupils' different levels of competency in writing are not considered to quite the same degree and materials to stimulate their imagination, such as video clips and good literature, are not used as extensively as they could be to fire pupils' imagination. Hence, pupils' achievement in writing is not as good as in reading and mathematics.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The ambition and determination to succeed are evident in the continuing improvement in standards and the excellent way equality is

promoted to enable pupils of all different backgrounds to succeed. The work of subject leaders in checking the work of the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Lessons are observed, pupils' work is examined and assessments are thoroughly analysed. The information gathered provides a firm basis for self-evaluation, which is accurate in almost every aspect and provides a clear blueprint for future planning. This has led to improvements in problem solving in mathematics, investigation skills in science and wider competency in ICT, which illustrate the school's good capacity for improvement. Strategies to improve writing are clearly highlighted in the school improvement plan, although there is more to do to strengthen aspects of provision and achievement in the Foundation Stage. Governors take their roles very seriously and do their best to hold the school to account.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's attainment on entering Nursery is below that typically expected for their age, and over half speak little or no English. By the end of Reception, attainment is still below the levels expected in some aspects of language, mathematical and personal development. Children are made to feel special and tenderly nurtured, which makes them happy learners. Their achievement is satisfactory overall. Good additional language support makes a valuable contribution to the progress of children learning to speak English. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Its impact is more evident in improving children's skills than developing their curiosity and understanding. Early reading skills are given high priority, therefore, children's knowledge of letters and words develops well, and by the end of Reception, attainment in reading is higher than typically expected. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers and support staff work successfully with small groups of children, assessing and building upon their responses, which improves their reading and number skills. Teachers also provide opportunities for children to learn through play. However, this is less successful, partly because of the limited space in the Reception classes but also because some of the activities are repetitive and do not stimulate children's curiosity sufficiently. Teachers concentrate on teaching key skills to small groups of children. Consequently, children learning through play do not benefit from sufficient adult intervention to develop their reasoning skills and extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. This is why the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is not as good as the school judges it to be.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in writing.
- Improve the quality of children's learning through play in the Foundation Stage.

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
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	1

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Inspection of Acacias Community Primary School, Manchester, M19 2WW

Thank you for your friendly welcome and for answering my questions so politely and helpfully. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit.

You are right to be proud of your school. It is a good one and some things are excellent, such as the way you are cared for and given extra help with English or learning. In return, you behave extremely well and give of your best. I fully agree with you that children of all different backgrounds and cultures join together as one big happy school family.

I also agree with your comments about the teaching being good and having lots of interesting extra activities to take part in. I believe that this is why you enjoy school. Good teaching and your hard work help you to make good progress and achieve higher than average standards in reading, mathematics and science. Despite the cramped space for computers, I can see that you are gaining good skills in ICT.

School leaders run the school well. They check your learning to ensure that you make good progress. They check what happens in lessons to see if there is anything that can be improved. This is why your school keeps getting better.

My job is to find out what the school does well and help it to improve further. I have two recommendations.

- Your achievement in writing is not as good as in other subjects. I have asked your teachers to try different ways to stimulate your imagination and set the writing task at just the right level for you in every lesson. You can help by working hard to reach the targets that teachers set for you.
- Children starting school settle happily and soon learn new skills such as reading. I have asked class teachers to look again at the activities that young children choose for themselves, to see if they can make them even more interesting and find time to talk to children about their new experiences.