

Audlem St James' CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111267
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310548
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoff Lawrence

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Ellis
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Nolan-Burnitt
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Heathfield Road Audlem Crewe Cheshire CW3 0HH
Telephone number	01270 811450
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average in size and has been affected by recent reorganization within the local area. This has resulted in more pupils attending the school and has more than doubled the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It serves an area of predominantly private housing with above average social and economic circumstances.

Eligibility for free school meals is much lower than usual. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school offers part-time Nursery provision and forms part of the South Cheshire Rural Nursery, which also provides for children at two other rural local schools. The Nursery has been included in this inspection because it is led by Audlem School. The school holds the following awards: Investors in People accreditation; Inclusion Quality Mark; Basic Skills Award; Eco Schools Bronze Award; and the Healthy Schools Award.

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. It has particular strengths in the care and support it offers to its pupils and the way in which it actively promotes their personal development.

The school has welcomed a significant number of new pupils in the last two years. These new pupils have been a challenge for the school but it has acted swiftly to integrate them well. This has ensured that they have settled quickly and, consequently, they are now making the progress expected of them. For those pupils who have been in the school since the Foundation Stage, progress is satisfactory and they achieve standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. The 2007 test results showed a slight rise in standards.

Teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. Teachers are beginning to make better use of pupil performance data, but its use at present does not ensure that all groups of pupils have the appropriate level of challenge to allow them to achieve as well as they can. This is a concern noted by some parents. The school's monitoring of pupils' performance indicates that pupils are beginning to make better progress. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because their individual education plans have very specific tasks to help them improve and their progress is closely tracked.

Pupils' behaviour is generally good. They are taught about, and have an excellent understanding of, the importance of a healthy diet from an early age. They have a range of opportunities to participate in physical activities. Pupils carry out a number of responsibilities well and make a good contribution to the school community.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. A contributing factor in this is the vastly improved use of information and communication technology (ICT) and this adds to pupils' enjoyment of lessons.

The school has come through a difficult period and is now settled and moving forwards. The headteacher and governors have been judicious in the appointment of key staff. This has resulted in the formation of a new leadership team. They have deployed staff strategically to ensure that progress and standards rise. The early signs are positive and improvements can be seen in the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum.

The headteacher is working effectively to develop a strong team approach to school improvement. Although the leadership of the school has improved and recognised that the role of the subject leaders is at present underdeveloped. The school has correctly identified areas for further development but its self-evaluation processes at present lack rigour. For example, although there is an extensive monitoring programme, lesson observations do not always place sufficient emphasis on the outcomes of teaching on pupils learning.

There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection particularly in standards. Progress pupils make in ICT is now good. Taking this into account and the recent development in teamwork in the school, which has been led by the increasingly effective and able leadership team, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children make a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage. They enter Nursery with skills and knowledge at the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning. Good

leadership and good teaching and learning have led to the introduction of an exciting range of opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and skills. This has resulted in children making good progress in all areas of their learning. The outdoor curriculum, although not fully developed, reflects all areas of learning. This is contributing to good language development. Children enjoy coming to school, gaining a high degree of independence and confidence. Consequently, they make good progress in their personal and social development. For example, Nursery children were seen to cooperate well when matching socks on a washing line.

Staff provide a good level of care and support for these young children and this, coupled with close monitoring of the children's progress, helps them set appropriate and challenging tasks. School tracking data shows that, by the end of the Foundation Stage, the current children's knowledge and skills are above those expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers use information on pupils' progress more effectively to inform teaching, so that work is set that enables all pupils to achieve well in English, mathematics and science.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they have a greater understanding of performance data and its use in helping to raise standards and achievement.

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

Achievement is satisfactory and pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Standards achieved at the end of Year 6 are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Results in 2007 show that standards have improved from 2006 in all areas, particularly in English, where the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels is now above the national average. The recent influx of new pupils, many of whom had learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been helped to settle quickly into their new school and have made satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because their performance is closely monitored. This leads to teaching being tailored to their specific needs. Parents of these pupils are supportive of the school and all it does for their children.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and a strength of the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the close links with the local church contributes greatly to this aspect. They have a good awareness of other faiths and cultures, not only through the curriculum but also through feature weeks such as 'World - Wide Arts' which helps them to respect and value the diversity of the world. Their social and moral skills are well developed. Roles as prefects, monitors and talking partners reinforce such skills and enable pupils to contribute usefully to the school community. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite, welcoming and articulate.

Healthy diet and lifestyles are positively encouraged and pupils say that they understand and know how to stay fit and keep healthy. Pupils are developing sound workplace and other skills to contribute to their future economic well-being. They work well together and support each

other in their learning. Their attendance and punctuality are good. Their basic skills in literacy and mathematics remain satisfactory but are improving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The impact of recent improvements in teaching is yet to be seen in terms of higher standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. Teachers' class management skills are good, although classroom assistants could be better engaged during lesson introductions. Teachers are beginning to use information about what pupils know and where there are gaps in their understanding to help organise learning. This however, is not consistent across all classes. Better use could be made of this information to ensure that all groups of ability are sufficiently challenged to help them achieve as well as they are able. The result is that the pace of learning occasionally drops and consequently learning slows. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because intervention strategies to help them achieve are well planned and closely monitored. This helps them to achieve the targets set for them. Teachers now make good use of ICT as an aid to learning and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The recent improvements to the curriculum and teaching and learning is contributing to the better progress made by pupils, as seen in the school's tracking data. There has been a successful recent focus on writing. This resulted in good improvements in English, particularly for the more able pupils. Teachers are beginning to make meaningful links between subjects, but this is at an early stage of development.

Focus days such as art days, science afternoons and a wide range of visiting specialists all enhance the learning opportunities and experiences of the pupils.

There is good provision for physical education and this links well to the strong focus on healthy lifestyles and personal and social development.

Pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as sports and music, which add to their learning and enjoyment. There is good support within the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care is good with strengths that support pupils' personal development and well-being. A key feature of the school is its inclusive nature. This is borne out not only by the achievement of Inclusion Quality Mark, but by the effective way the school helped the large influx of new pupils settle very quickly into their classes and address their individual learning needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable receive high quality support and care. Policies on child protection are in place and the school meets the latest government requirements on safeguarding children. Procedures for first aid and risk assessments are secure. Recent improvements in the quality of monitoring and tracking are resulting in better identification of pupils needs. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils are beginning to be more involved in the assessment of their own work and to have a greater

understanding of their targets. They say that teachers help them to improve their work and that the newly introduced marking strategies are helping them to understand their next steps in learning. There are early signs that these measures are helping to accelerate pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has been effective in building a new team over the last 18 months. She has managed improvements to the building and responded well to the effect local reorganisation has had on the school. She has placed a high priority on the care and well-being of pupils and this is central to the school's values and ethos. The new leadership team know the key strengths and weaknesses in the school. They have put strategies into place to raise standards and achievement and there are early signs that these measures are helping to drive improvement.

Some subject leaders are beginning to evaluate learning, but this is at an early stage and has yet to extend to include all subjects and aspects. Their monitoring is beginning to highlight additional strengths and weaknesses. Progress has been made in using this analysis to determine priorities in individual subject planning. At this early stage, robust systems to ensure consistency in the quality and rigour of subject leaders' work have yet to be established.

Governors discharge their responsibilities satisfactorily and fulfil their role in holding the school to account for the impact of improvement initiatives. Resources are well managed and monitored closely.

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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?	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	2

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	1
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	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?	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	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**

Thank you for making us welcome during your inspection. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing you work. We were impressed by how friendly, polite and helpful you were towards us. Your behaviour is good. We were pleased to hear you tell us about the many things in your school. We know that you enjoy the extra-curricular and sports and music activities. The adults in your school are working hard and helping you to do better in your work and to enjoy school more. We think that the school provides many things for you to do to make your school day enjoyable. We also noticed how well you understand about healthy eating and taking lots of exercise.

There are many good things about Audlem St James', but we have asked the school to do some things to make it even better.

We have asked the school to help you achieve higher standards in your work. We have also asked your teachers to use all the information they have about each one of you to help you do better, so that they can give you work that will help you to get improved results.

Thank you once again for helping us with the inspection. We enjoyed our two days with you and we hope that you continue to work hard and enjoy school.