

Alanbrooke School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121326
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	313948
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Lesley Clark

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Martlew
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Bean
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Alanbrooke Barracks Topcliffe Thirsk North Yorkshire YO7 3SF
Telephone number	01845 577474
Fax number	0

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves an isolated army barracks near Thirsk. Most of the pupils are children of army personnel at the adjacent camp. Most families have extended periods when they operate as single-parent families while one parent does war service abroad. Rarely do pupils stay long enough to go through from Reception to Year 6 and few complete a full key stage because families are posted elsewhere at frequent intervals. Periodically the whole school population and its size change completely when a regiment leaves and is replaced by another. Many pupils have attended in excess of five schools before attending this one. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Attendance is above average because pupils like coming to school. They discover that 'learning can be fun' and that it is 'all right to make mistakes because you can learn from them'. Most pupils have extensive experience of other schools. In their opinion, 'this one is better because teachers try to get to know you and they really explain things'. Outstanding care, support and guidance ensure that pupils have a smooth transition at whatever stage they join the school. This helps them to settle in quickly and start learning. As a result, their achievement is good for in this small school they quickly realise that everyone is noticed and each child matters. Parents speak highly of the support both they and their children receive, explaining, 'If you have any concerns or need to talk their door is always open.'

Outstanding systems to check and support pupils' academic progress are rarely reflected in outstanding results in national tests because pupils come and go so often. Most pupils start at below average level. Standards in national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 are broadly average, with performance in mathematics and reading stronger than in writing. The school identified that pupils needed more opportunities to speak and listen to each other to help them articulate their ideas before writing them down and this strategy is working well. Standards in science are generally below average because pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Because of the way the curriculum is organised, pupils sometimes do not make up the work they have missed.

Achievement is good because pupils are well taught for much of the time. Reception children and pupils in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 make appreciable gains in their learning. In these year groups teaching quality is consistently good with outstanding features, especially in matching work to meet pupils' different needs. Pupils are fully involved in assessing their own learning and so they know what they have to do to improve their work. Progress slows in Years 3 and 4 due to inconsistent behaviour management so that low-level disruption by a small minority sometimes hinders the learning of others. The school is in the process of addressing this issue to minimise the impact on pupils' learning. Behaviour is satisfactory overall as the majority behave well and try hard to meet the school's high expectations. Good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they make good progress.

Pupils' personal development is good, a reflection of the outstanding support given to individuals and the clear routines which give them security. Older pupils behave maturely, looking after younger ones sensibly and taking on responsibilities around the school. They respond well to the straightforward system of rewards, freely acknowledging that 'they control you better at this school'. Because of this, pupils feel safe; most learn self-control and try hard. They have some good ideas on how to improve their school, but have limited opportunities to influence what happens and to take some responsibility for actions they have suggested. Pupils lead healthy lives, appreciating the benefits of healthy eating and exercise. They are sensitive to the needs of others and respect their views. They have a good sense of community and the school's good curriculum successfully broadens their understanding of the wider community beyond the army camp. They are well prepared for their future lives for they learn to be tolerant and cooperative, knowing it is important to work hard to achieve success.

The school is well led and managed under the first class direction of the headteacher, who gives exceptionally clear guidance to staff, governors and pupils. Her teaching provides an excellent role model. Despite frequent changes of membership to the governing body as army personnel come and go, outstanding management systems mean that governors' support continues to

be effective. The school's self-evaluation underestimated its effectiveness because it is always starting from scratch with new sets of pupils. The school has a real buzz about it. This rubs off on the children, who respond with enthusiasm to their teachers' playful approach and cheerful outlook. Equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled exceptionally well so that all learners realise it is important to do well at school. This is the hallmark of the school's effectiveness. Financial management is good and the school gives good value for money. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and has good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start. They quickly settle into school, where they share a classroom with pupils in Years 1 and 2. Good teaching and good support enable them to make good progress in all areas of learning. From a below average starting point most reach the levels expected by the end of the Reception year. Those who find learning more difficult make especially good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the frequent opportunities they have to play actively and energetically, learning to share with others. Children have a lot of fun because staff devise imaginative activities which arouse their curiosity. As a result, children tell each other stories, interpreting the pictures in books, or construct a path together through imaginary woodland with a see-saw bridge over a swamp. Routines for children to keep track of what they have done are less well established. Systems to assess children's progress are outstanding for they are simple to manage and effective. Children's welfare is promoted exceptionally well. Good links with parents mean they are fully involved in their children's learning. The provision is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of behaviour management in Years 3 and 4 so as to accelerate pupils' progress in these years.
- Adjust the science curriculum to ensure that pupils catch up what they have missed elsewhere.
- Find ways of giving pupils an effective voice in what goes on in their school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From below average starting points, pupils achieve well. Standards in national tests vary from close to average to below average depending on the mix of pupils and how long they have attended this school. Pupils make the best progress in reading and mathematics. Progress in science is more uneven because some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and their understanding of scientific vocabulary is sketchy. The school's targets rarely reflect the group of pupils for which they were set. Similarly trends in results are unreliable because of the rate at which pupils come and go. The school's very detailed and regular assessments confirm that pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2; progress then slows in Years 3 and 4, accelerating in Years 5 and 6. The more able pupils do well, as do those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, because their needs are well catered for.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to this school, agreeing that 'it is better here because there is more space and there is no bullying because everyone knows everyone else.' Their attendance is above average and the majority work and play enthusiastically. They have good relationships with each other and with adults and are keen to win praise. Pupils do not have a lot of say in what goes on at their school and think 'A school council would be even better for the children.' Behaviour is satisfactory. Most pupils behave very well, responding quickly to the school's high expectations, but where class management is less strong, pupils take advantage and slacken their efforts. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good as pupils learn to appreciate each other's views and gain knowledge of the wider world outside the army.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The majority of pupils learn well because they are fully involved in checking their own progress. They know what they have to aim for and what they need to do to improve their work. Well directed questions help pupils to understand new concepts and teachers' cheerful approach encourages pupils to give of their best and to ask questions when they do not understand. Teachers match work carefully to the different age and ability groups in their class, exceptionally well in Years 5 and 6 where pupils make rapid progress. Teaching assistants give good support and are skilled at helping those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to understand new work. Learning is less effective in Years 3 and 4 because classroom management is less secure. Pupils are unsure what they have to do and so they waste time. In all classes, teachers encourage pupils to discuss ideas with a partner and use up-to-date technology to make teaching points clear.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum successfully balances provision for basic skills with a broad range of practical subjects to extend the range of pupils' educational experience. Pupils have good opportunities to use their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in other subjects. The way the science curriculum is organised means that some pupils miss out on some topics when they join the school at different points of the year and so some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. A good range of extra-curricular activities as well as educational visits and visitors to school help pupils to appreciate the wider world and its diverse cultures. This approach enlivens pupils' learning and helps them to see it is relevant to their future lives. The school's current focus on speaking and listening is also having a positive impact on learning and developing pupils' confidence.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding systems to track and record pupils' academic and personal development from the moment they enter school ensures that little time is wasted in setting pupils' work at the right level for their individual needs. Staff regularly assess pupils' achievements and so when they move on to their next school they have a full record to take with them to show their

progress so far. Older pupils are fully involved in setting and checking their own progress in meeting targets that they have helped to set. As a result, pupils become increasingly keen to do well. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and they make good progress in a short time. Procedures for safeguarding children are extremely good and fully meet all current government guidelines. High quality social, emotional, health and citizenship education promotes pupils' personal development well in a short space of time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Outstanding direction by the headteacher and simple, efficient systems to ensure the school's effectiveness ensure that the school runs well despite its ever shifting population. However, this is rarely mirrored in consistently high standards or outstanding personal development because the school is always starting afresh with different pupils with different needs. Much work devolves to the headteacher. However, in the last year, with staff now trained to 'lead from the middle', management is being shared. Monitoring of teaching and learning is accurate and with more staff recently involved is beginning to impact on its quality. Weaknesses are accurately identified and support targeted where it is needed. The school's accurate self-evaluation in terms of what needs to be done next sets a clear agenda for improvement. Governors are closely involved, using e-mail, for instance, as a means of staying in close contact when posted abroad. Financial management is good and caters efficiently for flexible numbers and staffing.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	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	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	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 Alanbrooke School, Alanbrooke Barracks, Thirsk, YO7 3SF

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I appreciated your friendliness and your lively interest in your school. Even those of you who had only been in the school a few weeks had lots of good things to say about it. I agree with you that you go to a good school. Your teachers spend a lot of time and trouble sorting out the right work for you to do. Most of them involve you in assessing how well you have learnt new things and what you need to do next to improve your work. In order to do this effectively, your school has excellent systems to support and guide you from the moment you start school. As a result, you achieve well both academically and personally, helped by the fact that your attendance is above average.

Behaviour is satisfactory on balance. While most of you behave extremely well, working hard and taking on responsibilities, a small minority spoil it by not concentrating in lessons and calling out. This means that your progress slows and it makes it harder for you to catch up later. This is something I have asked your school to improve. You are most successful in mathematics and reading but generally do not do as well in science. This is because some of you have missed out on some topics because of moving schools so often. I have asked your teachers to adjust the science curriculum so you catch up on what you have missed elsewhere.

Your school is well led and managed and under the first class direction of the headteacher everyone makes sure that you have equal opportunities and rights. Several of you suggested that you would like a school council because you have lots of ideas that you would like to put into practice. I agree and have asked your school to find ways of giving you an effective voice about what goes on in your school.

I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you all and wish you the very best for your future lives. I hope you continue to enjoy the extensive playing space and interesting activities at Alanbrooke.