

Upper Arley CofE VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135037
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	319598
Inspection date	15 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	89
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	11
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Bell
Headteacher	Frances French
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Upper Arley Bewdley DY12 1XA
Telephone number	01299 861260

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	15 September 2008
Inspection number	319598

Fax number

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Age group 4-11

Inspection date 15 September 2008

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Upper Arley CofE VC Primary School has a below average number of pupils, and provides for the Early Years Foundation Stage [EYFS]. In 2007, the school changed from a first school to a primary school, following the reorganisation of schools in the Wyre Forest area. The school has a lower than average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much lower than average. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff in the last year. All four class teachers have been in the school for less than two years, and three of them are in their first year of teaching. There has been extensive building work on the school site for some months, which is ongoing, and has caused significant disruption to the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Upper Arley CofE VC Primary school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school has endured a very difficult year since local reorganisation resulted in its conversion from a first school to a primary school, with two additional year groups. The school building was inadequate so there has been a considerable amount of building activity in and around the school for several months. In addition, staffing difficulties have led to an almost entirely new teaching staff team being appointed from the start of this term. Although the present staff team is inexperienced, the outlook for the school and its pupils is very positive. The new staff, led supportively by the headteacher and senior teacher, are working well to establish a stimulating and caring learning environment from EYFS through to Year 6. A critical element during the school's tribulations has been the considerable support and guidance provided by the local authority (LA), which is continuing. This has led to improvements in the achievement and standards of pupils, which are now satisfactory, although mathematics is still lagging slightly and remains an area for improvement. It is important that this improvement is sustained, and that the promising start made by the new staff is built upon, through consistent monitoring and evaluation of teaching. It is also vital that the new building is completed as soon as possible. This applies especially to the accommodation for the EYFS, as children are at present based in a small temporary area with very limited outdoor learning provision. Nevertheless, these children are receiving a satisfactory start to their school life because staff are providing them with an appropriate range of learning activities. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, and although a few have reservations, these apply almost entirely to the problems described, which are showing every sign of easing. This is because the school's present satisfactory capacity to improve is increasing rapidly.

Pupils are happy and very well cared for, which they appreciate. They show tremendous enthusiasm and enjoy all aspects of their life in school, especially their opportunities for practical experiences and 'fun' learning. A strong feature of the school is the very good relationships pupils have with each other and adults. Behavioural problems have been ironed out through the introduction of new strategies, and behaviour is good, or often better. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their contemporaries, and the school provides good support for them through competent teaching assistants and good links and partnerships with other providers.

Teaching is satisfactory, and sometimes good. Pupils in the oldest class have made good progress in the last year because of consistently good teaching. Teachers are planning effectively for the needs of their pupils, although, as yet, guidance for improvement is not consistently established through marking and individual targets. Many clubs, visits and visitors, and good involvement with the local community and church, enrich a satisfactory curriculum. The leadership and management of the school, including the EYFS, are satisfactory, although the two members of the senior management team carry a heavy load. Other staff are not yet in a position to take on management responsibilities, but the school is aware of the need to train them so that their skills can be implemented at the earliest opportunity. Challenging targets, with the advice of the LA, were set for Year 6 in 2008, the first year of reorganisation, but were not met. Much improved assessment procedures and learning indicate that pupils are likely to meet the school targets set for 2009. The governing body has improved its contribution to school management, and is now much more proactive as well as being strongly supportive.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is satisfactory, with some good features. Children have very positive attitudes to life in school, behave well and are very eager to participate in all their many activities. They mix happily with each other and adults and are developing confidence and independent skills. Most come into the EYFS with the skills expected for their age and achieve satisfactorily in all areas of development, entering Year 1 with average skills in all areas of learning. The school has very effective links with local nurseries, and works closely and positively with all parents. The new class teacher has made a very promising start in spite of considerable restrictions in space caused by the class being in temporary accommodation during the extensive building work. She and her competent team of assistants ensure that children have access to all areas of learning in an attractive and stimulating environment. The class is able to make frequent learning forays into the attractive school grounds. The provision for the welfare of children in EYFS is good. Learning areas are safe and secure, and staff have a good understanding of welfare needs and promote social and physical development effectively. The leadership and management of the EYFS are overseen at present by the headteacher, and are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Ensure that the monitoring, evaluation and support of teaching and learning lead to sustained improvement in achievement and standards, particularly in mathematics.
- Establish, as a matter of urgency, the EYFS in a suitable learning environment, in order to meet the children's needs more fully.
- Develop strategies for the professional development of teaching staff so that leadership and management responsibilities can be distributed more evenly.

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 the next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards throughout the school are average, although a growing number of pupils are reaching above average levels. A combination of the reorganisation of the school and significant turnover in teaching staff resulted in a difficult year for the school in 2007-08, especially in reaching predicted standards in Years 3, 4 and 6. As a result, some pupils underachieved and the attainment of a significant number of pupils was below that expected and predicted by the school, especially in mathematics. Rapid remedial action has been taken, very well guided and supported by the LA, and this has resulted in considerable recent improvement in achievement throughout the school. There is substantial evidence that pupils throughout Key Stage 2 are now achieving at least satisfactorily in English and science, and are making good gains in progress in mathematics. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are maintaining their previously satisfactory progress. Encouragingly, the action taken by the school is enabling a number of pupils to make much faster progress than in the past. Progress is satisfactory across the school, and good in the Year 5/6 class, which is an improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress. There is some evidence that boys have made less progress than girls, especially in English, but this picture is also improving as a result of school action.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils show great enthusiasm for their life in school, and clearly much enjoy their learning and friendships. In conversation, they variously describe it as 'breathtaking', 'homely, we are just one big family' and, importantly, 'fair'. This positive attitude to school, confirmed by good attendance, contributes strongly to pupils' good personal development. They also behave very well around the school and in class, which they say is much improved this year. Behaviour and achievement have been helped by a well-understood 'zone' system of awards. Pupils understand the importance of being healthy, the school holding both Healthy Schools and Active Mark awards. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. The school enjoys strong links with the church, and promotes a variety of visits and events that explore and celebrate different faiths and cultures. Pupils are adamant that they are safe in school and that there are no problems with bullying. As one said, 'We learn discipline here'. They have good opportunities to join clubs such as eco-schools, ocarina, art and craft, and enjoy taking part in local community activities. These include meeting royalty and taking part in an Arts festival in Bewdley. There is an active school council, which has promoted improvements to toilets and requested cooked food and a fruit stand. Preparation for their future adult life is satisfactory as pupils develop sound skills in literacy, numeracy and teamwork.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The almost entirely new teaching staff have made a bright start to providing a standard of education and learning opportunities that are at least satisfactory. Nearly all teaching and learning observed in the inspection was good, and teachers have a consistently enthusiastic, caring and well-organised approach to teaching. However, it is too early to judge the impact on learning over the long term of the new team of teachers. They have very good relationships with their pupils, and generally high expectations of them. Their planning is consistent across the school, providing for all abilities, and new assessment procedures are being effectively introduced. Teachers are conscious of the need to make learning stimulating and fun, such as the challenge to the Year 3/4 class to use a number bond code to find out who had committed a crime in the school. They also use smart boards well to enhance learning. Teachers work well with a dedicated team of teaching assistants, who make strong contributions to learning, especially with those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A consistent approach to marking and guidance to pupils on their personal learning targets are not yet fully established across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory and broad curriculum. The change of the school's status has resulted in classes being organised into mixed year groups in Years 1 to 6. The school is conscious of the need to provide a rich 'rolling' two-year curriculum which avoids pupils repeating earlier learning experiences, and is steadily implementing this new approach. Literacy and numeracy skills are being developed satisfactorily across the curriculum. Opportunities are also being provided for the development of foreign languages in the school, and much improved provision of equipment is helping to enhance learning in information and communication technology.

The school offers many varied enrichment opportunities, such as visits to museums, a residential outdoor education centre, a synagogue and an arboretum. There is a good range of after-school clubs, and pupils occasionally work on projects with pupils from other local schools. These opportunities make a good contribution to the pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral support is strong because the school provides a good level of care and welfare, and staff appreciate the needs of those needing extra support, especially looked-after children. The school has good partnerships with outside agencies, such as the Noah's Ark Trust, and social services in several authorities. It also works closely with parents to ensure that the needs of all pupils are known and understood. Good procedures for monitoring attendance are in place, leading to an improvement in recent years. Procedures to promote child protection and safety are robust. Arrangements for tracking pupils' academic progress have improved, and are now satisfactory. Target setting for pupils has been introduced, but is fairly generalised as yet, and pupils are vague about what and how they must improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school have recovered well from a number of difficulties caused by reorganisation and the disruption caused by ongoing building works. The headteacher is widely respected by the school community for her care and concern for the welfare of children and pupils. She has shown determination in taking some difficult decisions and is now building an almost completely new team to take the school forward. She has been well supported in this by the senior teacher who has taken on a number of major responsibilities with enthusiasm and success. The LA has also given significant help to the management of the school during these changes. As a result, the new team in the school is showing a satisfactory and rising capacity to improve. Achievement has already moved upwards and the school's academic targets are now realistic, challenging but attainable. At present, the headteacher and senior teacher carry a large management load because other staff have no previous management experience. The school is considering how this can be more evenly spread in the medium term. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory but insufficiently evaluative of the impact of actions taken. Community cohesion is strongly and effectively promoted throughout the school, and enriches the lives of the pupils. The new governing body is now finding its feet and members are offering fresh skills to enhance the management of the school.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

16 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Upper Arley CofE VC. Primary School, Bewdley, DY12 1XA

Thank you all so much for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, and were pleased to hear about all the things you like about your school. We think that you have a satisfactory education, which will become even better when your buildings are finished.

This is what we liked about your school:

? You behave very well, enjoy your learning, and work well with adults. ? You get on very well with each other, with no bullying. ? All of you, especially in the youngest class, are very well looked after by the staff. ? You are reaching satisfactory standards in your work, and you work hard in your lessons. ? Your attendance is good, you act safely around school, and you know how to lead healthy lives in an eco-environment. ? The school helps you to join in many activities in the local community. ? Your parents are proud of the school and are pleased with the staff there. ? We think your teachers and headteacher have made a good start to the year, after all the problems last year.

What we have asked your school to do now:

? Make sure that the teaching continues to help you improve your learning in every class, especially in mathematics. ? Help the youngest children to move to their new class soon, to make their learning as enjoyable as possible. ? Start to prepare all the teachers so that they will be able to help to manage the school when they are ready. You can help as well by continuing to work hard, enjoying your learning, and helping your teachers. We hope you like your new classrooms!

Best wishes,

Rod Braithwaite Lead inspector