

Aston by Sutton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110993
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	325266
Inspection date	13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	102
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs B Coker
Headteacher	Mr C Abbott
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Aston Lane Aston Runcorn Cheshire WA7 3DB
Telephone number	01928 711 953
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how effective is the teaching of writing, especially in Key Stage 1; how well learning is organised in mixed-age classes to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can; the degree to which pupils are involved in their own learning; how knowledgeable governors are about the school's work and the degree to which they hold it to account for its performance.

Evidence was gathered from the school's judgements about attainment on entry to Reception, test results and the self-evaluation form, nationally published assessment data, the school's own assessment records, relevant policies, observations of the school at work, including visits to lessons and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions were also held with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, staff, the vice-chair of governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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 the report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school is in a rural setting but serves pupils who live in a predominantly urban area and who come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises a Reception class. Very few pupils take a free school meal. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The percentage of those from minority ethnic groups is very low. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The school has been recognised for its promotion of healthy lifestyles and of sports by the awarding of National Healthy Schools status and the Activemark.

There is separate provision for caring for children before and after school. This was inspected at the same time as the school inspection and receives a separate report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and they are well cared for and supported. There is a lack of sharpness in the management systems for tracking pupils' progress, for setting pupils' targets and for involving pupils in their own learning and assessment. This means that pupils make satisfactory progress overall through both Key Stages 1 and 2 and attain broadly average standards, rather than achieving well and at above average standards as the school judges. The provision and standards are good in the EYFS and children in the Reception class achieve well.

Pupils read fluently, have a sound grasp of number and can apply these skills to help solve problems. They use information and communication technology (ICT) adeptly to research and to enhance the presentation of their work. The least effective aspect of their work is writing. Some, especially boys, are reluctant writers and, despite the school having introduced a new strategy to motivate pupils to write more and with better quality, the impact of this in raising standards in the subject is not yet evident. Sometimes, the more able pupils are insufficiently challenged and the result of this is reflected in the lower than average proportions of these pupils reaching higher levels in the teacher assessments in Year 2 and national tests in Year 6. This is most evident in Year 2, especially in writing.

Pupils enjoy school and praise their teachers for being friendly and fair. They are keen, through the school council, to suggest improvements to provision, for example, creating a wildlife area. They are caring about each other and behave well. Pupils fully understand that a balanced diet and regular exercise are beneficial to their health and they tend and nurture their newly planted vegetable plot lovingly. The school's well devised and taught programme to promote pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship development is effective. It helps pupils appreciate what represents healthy relationships, gives them an awareness of the dangers of misusing drugs and medicines, and promotes their sense of community and of selflessness well. The school council gives pupils opportunities to work as a committee, to understand the fundamentals of democracy and to take on responsible roles as chairperson and as a secretary.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and form very good relationships with their pupils. They use a range of activities well to promote pupils' investigative skills in mathematics and science. Teaching is satisfactory overall. A brisk pace is not always maintained in lessons and the work set does not consistently match pupils' needs, particularly more able pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This is because assessment information and target-setting is not used rigorously enough to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well.

The satisfactory curriculum promotes pupils' sound basic skills and provides them with many enriching experiences. After-school clubs, residential visits, coaching in sport from teachers from neighbouring high schools all contribute well to pupils' enjoyment to their good health and to their personal and social development. A minor shortcoming in the physical education curriculum is the lack of a school hall or equivalent space. The school does well to compensate creatively for this, adapting classrooms and other spaces to accommodate physical education lessons indoors. The school acknowledges it could do more to promote pupils' writing skills more effectively throughout the curriculum.

Leaders and managers ensure that regulations are met as regards child protection, health and safety, ensuring equality and vetting adults who work with the pupils. There are strong partnerships with outside agencies that ensure that pupils, especially any in need of specialist

help, are well cared for. Although the quality of care and support is good, academic guidance is currently no better than satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are sensitively supported to achieve as well as their peers.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Senior leaders work together harmoniously and the headteacher ensures positive partnerships with parents and other providers. The ethos of the school is friendly, family orientated and positive. The rigour with which the school's performance is evaluated and checked on by senior staff and governors is no better than satisfactory. This has resulted in the school evaluating its overall effectiveness rather too highly. Improvement since the last inspection, the school's capacity to improve further and the value for money it provides are all satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the EYFS is good. Children are skilfully helped to settle quickly into routines, to feel safe and secure and to achieve well to reach good standards. When they enter Reception, children's skills are broadly in line with those expected. Staff record frequent observations of individual children's development in all areas of their learning. This enables them to plan activities that challenge children at the level appropriate for them, which, subsequently, results in good achievement. Notable are the strong and very positive relationships between staff and children and between children. The manner in which children cooperatively and independently take turns and share resources and listen to each other, reflects their very good personal, social and emotional development. Because letter sounds are taught effectively, children acquire skills in reading and writing which are above those characteristic of most children entering Year 1. However, children's writing skills are relatively weaker than those in reading.

Staff make sure that all statutory welfare requirements are met and this leads to children working safely and happily both in and out of doors. The fact that the indoor accommodation is quite cramped and that access to the outdoor area is somewhat restricted represents a minor shortcoming in provision. The provision is well led and managed. Children's activities are well organised, staff work well as a team, supervision is rigorous and parents' support and involvement fully encouraged. Parents of children in the Reception class who responded to the inspection questionnaire were unanimous in their praise for the provision. The following comment typifies many parents' feelings, 'my child has only been here since September, but her progress has been fantastic. She has built up her confidence and settled in well.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in Years 1 to 6, especially in writing and that of the more able.
- Sharpen the systems to track pupils' progress, for target-setting and for involving pupils in their own learning and assessment.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently strong enough to ensure that pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good rather than satisfactory progress.

A small proportion of schools whose overall performance is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/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	1
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	2

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?	2

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?	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**

On behalf of the other inspector and myself I would like to thank you for your warm welcome when we inspected your school recently.

You are receiving a satisfactory education. The school is good at helping you to become caring and responsible young people. It was very nice, for example, to be able to chat to you so freely about your work and about what you thought of the school. It is also clear that your school council has lots of bright ideas about how to help to improve parts of the school. I thought that their idea for using the outside area as a wildlife classroom was great. Your headteacher and all the staff make sure that you are very well cared for and they make sure that the school is a friendly and happy place. They also work well with your parents and carers and other organisations to give you some lovely experiences that you would not otherwise have. It was also clear that you have a good knowledge of how to stay healthy, the Healthy Schools award you helped earn shows that. The children in Reception get off to a really good start.

One of my jobs when I inspect a school is to point out some things that would help it get even better. I have, therefore, asked those people who run the school to make sure that these happen.

- All of you in Years 1 to 6 need to make better progress with your work. This particularly applies to your writing and to those of you who find learning a bit easier than most.
- The systems the school uses to find out how well you are getting on, to set targets for your work and to involve you in your own learning need to be used better.
- All your lessons in Years 1 to 6 ought to help you make good progress.

Some of you can help with the first one of these by concentrating really hard on your writing.