

Almeley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116645
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	326422
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Watters HMI

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)	71
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	Terry Holden
Headteacher	Dorrie Coates
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Almeley Hereford HR3 6LH
Telephone number	01544 327267
Fax number	01544 327267

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school which mainly serves the villages of Almeley, Woonton and part of Lyonshall. In the summer term 2007, the school's number on roll was increased significantly following the closure of a neighbouring primary school. Also in 2007, the school went through a turbulent period when it was included in the local authority's list of schools subject to possible amalgamation or closure. The school's immediate future has now been assured by the local authority, pending any future national and local government budget settlements. All pupils are White British and none speaks English as an additional language. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is located in the mixed-age Reception and Year 1 class. The school has a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools Award, Eco-Schools Silver Award and the 2008 Herefordshire Primary School of the Year Award for sport and physical education.

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 which is at the heart of the local community, providing a rich context for learning and contributing effectively to village life. The school's aims state that:

'All children should become independent, cooperative and reflective learners, achieving recognition for their strengths...and for their personal qualities; there should be an atmosphere that fosters moral values, including respect for individual differences and that each child should be inspired to become valued members of the wider community.'

These aims are being met well and are at the centre of the school's day-to-day work.

Pupils' achievements are good and standards are generally average. Progress is more rapid in mathematics and reading than in writing and similarly, standards are lower in writing than they are in reading and mathematics. Some pupils do exceptionally well, making very good progress and reaching high standards. The progress made by the pupils who have learning difficulties is good, and their learning needs are carefully monitored.

The pupils' personal development and their well-being are good. Behaviour in classes and around the school is generally of a high standard. Pupils are cooperative, courteous and rightly proud of their school. They enjoy their lessons, support each other well and have good relationships with their teachers. The quality of teaching is good. While some is outstanding, the teaching in writing is not as good as in other subjects. Provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good.

The school's good curriculum is enriched by the many and varied activities offered in after-school clubs and curriculum topics, which help pupils understand connections between subjects and provide insights into important cultural and work-related activities. For example, recent cross-curricular topics include film making, animation, World Book Day and the Chinese New Year.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Almost 70% returned inspection questionnaires, which is very high. Parents hold the school in high regard and many appreciate the approachability of staff and the fact that their children cannot wait to get to school each day. Here are some of the things which parents wrote about the school: 'every day my daughter comes out of school full of tales about her day... I feel that I have a strong relationship with the school'; 'this is a family-friendly school which encourages children to look after their friends and be considerate'; and 'the attitude of the school is to have a go at everything... they encourage the children to see the wider picture'.

Pupils receive a good level of care, support and guidance. They are safe, and secure in the knowledge that, should they have any problems, they know that they can speak to any adult, and particularly their teachers. A group of older pupils spoke with great affection in appreciation of the headteacher. One of the pupils said, 'She's always there for us if we need her.'

Leadership and management are good. The work of the school is carefully monitored. Each pupil is treated equally and their progress is regularly tracked by checking assessment information, pupils' books and teachers' planning. The school has a good capacity to improve and has made good progress since its last inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children enter the school, their attainment varies considerably. Currently, it is generally in line with what is expected for their age, but in the recent past it has been below what is typically seen. During their time in the Reception class, most children make good progress and have a good start to their school life. They really enjoy the many and varied activities provided for them, learning how to cooperate, share and play together harmoniously. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that the children's personal development and well-being are good, and keep a close watch on their learning and development needs, through careful observations and assessments. The children's welfare is given high priority, and good links with parents, through an effective home school partnership, ensure that any concerns are quickly addressed. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well; for example, following recent assessments, the class teacher produced an action plan to show how the curriculum was being revised to take account of the areas of concern that were identified.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards overall and increase rates of progress in writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching in writing, making sure that persistent errors in pupils' work are eliminated, teachers' planning takes more account of tackling weaknesses and that there is a consistent approach to marking writing in each class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils achieve well and generally make good progress. This is most evident in reading and mathematics but less so in writing, where achievement is just satisfactory, with rates of progress varying considerably from year to year. Some pupils in each year group make exceptional progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6 in reading and mathematics. The majority of pupils attain standards in line with what is expected for their ages, and a small but significant proportion of pupils do even better than this, consistently reaching high standards. Standards in reading are above average in Key Stage 2. Standards in mathematics are more variable. They are above average in Years 2 and 6 and generally average in other year groups. Standards in writing are broadly in line with what is expected for the pupils' ages, but too many pupils are currently working below their age-related expectations. The results of the 2008 national assessments and tests for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils show that standards are broadly in line with national averages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils behave well, are respectful, enjoy coming to school and most have extremely positive attitudes. 'Thank you for visiting our class...' was a frequent comment to the lead inspector! The pupils are thoughtful, good humoured and eager to talk about their work. An outstanding feature of the pupils' personal development is that many are highly motivated. This is reflected in their good attendance which is above the national average for primary schools. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are tolerant and caring, and see the school as a secure extension of their family life. Pupils feel safe and have confidence in each other and the adults who work with them each day. They understand the importance of

eating healthily and living a healthy lifestyle. Many take part in sports activities and say they enjoy keeping fit. Pupils are developing a good understanding about cultures and faiths different from their own, for example through the school's multicultural week and when learning about life in Africa. These activities are helping pupils to develop a commitment to racial equality and to extend their understanding of life in other communities and countries. The pupils are confident and articulate young people who are already making a positive contribution to their own community which prepares them well for their working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning ranges from outstanding to satisfactory and is good overall. It is more effective in reading and mathematics than it is in writing. The quality of relationships between adults and pupils is exceptional. Lessons are greatly enjoyed by the pupils, who respond extremely well when their work is challenging and interesting. Teachers use questions skilfully to develop the pupils' knowledge and move them to the next level in their understanding, for example when solving mathematical problems in Year 1 and Years 5 and 6. Teachers generally use assessment accurately to match the pupils' work to their different learning needs, and target intervention strategies, particularly in mathematics and reading. This is less effective in writing. Pupils have many opportunities to work independently and in small groups, and this has a positive impact on their learning. Additional subject specific teaching is helping raise standards further, for example in French and information and communication technology (ICT). Teaching assistants make a very positive contribution when teaching small groups. Some higher attaining Year 1 boys benefited greatly from targeted intervention in Year 1, which helped them make good progress in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the learning needs of the pupils well. The provision and outcomes for reading, numeracy and ICT are good and are generally satisfactory in writing. The school is particularly effective in planning well for mixed-age classes to ensure that pupils have access to all aspects of the National Curriculum. An outstanding feature of the curriculum is the range of activities provided to enhance the pupils' learning experiences, particularly culturally and in physical education. An impressive number of after-school clubs, which are very popular with the pupils, extend and enrich the curriculum further. During the inspection, pupils in the after school art club greatly enjoyed making felt pictures in the style of Van Gogh's picture of sunflowers. Drama, sports, dance, cooking and singing clubs give additional evidence of the richness of the opportunities provided for the pupils. The provision and outcomes for the pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Visits to places of interest and visitors to school, and activities, such as taking part in an archaeological dig and working with a local artist, give pupils a valuable insight into their heritage and provide a positive stimulus for thinking about their own futures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pupils receive a high level of pastoral care and support. They are secure, safe and well looked after. All adults make sure that pupils are happy, enjoy their school life and do their best. The pupils' health and safety is given a high priority. Safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements and risk assessments are carefully attended to. The school knows its pupils well and takes great care to effectively promote their social well-being and equality. Challenging targets are set for each year group and at the end of each key stage. These are met well in reading and mathematics but less so in writing. The quality of academic guidance is at least satisfactory and improving as a result of a recent initiative to assess pupils' progress on a regular basis. While pupils have individual targets, not all know them or use them in their day-to-day work. Marking is generally satisfactory and in some cases good, such as in Year 2, where pupils are given helpful guidance about how to improve their work. However, this is not a consistent feature in all classes, particularly in writing. The school has exceptionally strong and productive links with the local community, and is seen by many parents as being at the heart of village life.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership and ensures that the school is well led and managed. She keeps a watchful eye on each child and knows them well. She has a clear picture of their achievements, their sensitivities and their talents, and has high expectations for them to do their best in all circumstances. She is supported well by all staff, including a senior teacher who deputises for the headteacher one day a week. Monitoring and evaluation are secure and strategic planning is good. The school's priorities are accurate, for example to raise standards and achievement in writing. Subject leaders are developing their role well and taking an increasingly positive lead in monitoring pupils' progress. There is a sensible and well thought out approach to sharing responsibilities among all staff, which contributes to the strong team spirit and good morale throughout the school. Governance is secure and governors' committees help the full governing body carry out its statutory duties satisfactorily. The school makes a positive contribution to community cohesion. Pupils learn about faiths and cultures different from their own and have compared their community with other local, national and global communities. Regular fund-raising for charities and themed events in the curriculum, for example studying different European countries, help pupils understand their common identity and appreciate diversity.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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	1
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?	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?	2

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

12 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Almeley Primary School, Herefordshire, HR3 6LH

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed talking with you about your work and all the interesting and exciting things you do. I was particularly impressed with the way you look after each other and by how much you enjoy coming to school. Many of you told me that you think your school is really good and I am pleased to say that I agree with you.

You have many opportunities to visit different places and have visitors come to school to work with you. This is helping you learn about life in other towns and cities, to think about your own interests and what you might want to do in the future. Many of you told me how much you enjoy the after-school clubs, including the sports activities. I think these are really important and your school does as well!

Although your school is doing really well, there are some things which could be improved. I have asked Mrs Coates and the teachers to give you better guidance about improving your writing, so that you can see when you have made any mistakes and then what to do to make sure your writing gets better. I have also asked them to make sure that your writing lessons are more carefully planned to help you improve more quickly.

You can help by always doing your best and making sure you know your targets.

Thank you again for making me so welcome. I will take away many happy memories of my time with you.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters

Her Majesty's Inspector