

Alderman Bolton Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133677
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	328725
Inspection dates	22–23 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Denise Shields

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	257
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	Mr Dennis Pickering
Headteacher	Mrs Lyndsey Glass
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Longdin Street Latchford Warrington Cheshire WA4 1PW
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a slightly larger than average sized school. Numbers on roll have increased since the previous inspection. The school serves an area that has higher than average levels of disadvantage. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Nearly half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. This figure has risen significantly since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is almost twice the national average and is increasing. In some year groups nearly half of the pupils are identified with a learning difficulty. A Nursery and two Reception classes form the school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The school has gained the Activemark, Healthy Schools and Silver Smoke Free awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Alderman Bolton is a good and improving school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding; for example the exceptionally good care and support provided for all pupils, particularly those who need extra help with their work. The inclusion of all pupils, whatever their background or particular need, is given high priority and is central to the school's work. The extensive partnerships with a wide range of organisations, other schools and the local community have a significant impact on pupils' all-round education and underpin the outstanding quality of their personal development. Activities beyond lessons are many and varied. Pupils speak enthusiastically about these opportunities, such as their recent residential visit to Menai in North Wales, which contribute much to raising their self-esteem. Pupils relish the responsibilities they have and carry these out in a conscientious and mature manner. Their behaviour is excellent; they respect each other and develop very good relationships. Pupils' understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles is very impressive. They state confidently that they feel safe, happy and can always find an adult to talk to if they have a problem. As a consequence, they grow in confidence, develop an enjoyment of learning and are well prepared for their next stage of education.

When children start in the Nursery their skills are low compared with expectations for their age, particularly their personal, social, speech and language skills. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards that are average. This degree of progress represents good achievement. Pupils who are less able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the sensitive support and guidance they receive from very effective teaching assistants. This enables them to take small steps in their learning. Teaching and learning are of good quality and some teaching is outstanding. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and clear explanations are made of what pupils are to learn. Very good use is made of new technology. For example, in Years 4 to 6 pupils use the special ultra mobile personal computers linked to a local project in which the school is involved. This captures their attention and has a positive impact on their rate of learning. Good levels of support from adults and their high expectations of how pupils should behave and respond ensure that pupils learn successfully in lessons. Secure and friendly relationships exist in all classes and pupils are not afraid to ask for help if they should need it. They are clear that marking, particularly in literacy, helps them to improve their work. However, although pupils have group learning targets, these are often too vague and not individual enough to meet their needs. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about the next steps they need to take to improve their learning.

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. Her drive to secure the best possible opportunities for all pupils to broaden their horizons and lift their aspirations is exceptional. All staff share her clear vision and determination to bring about improvement. The roles of the senior leadership team and subject leaders are developing well because they readily undertake a good range of training to improve their expertise. The school's self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate and links very clearly to plans for the future. The firm actions that have been taken have had measurable success and there has been good improvement in almost all aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection. For example, methods of teaching have been revised and strengthened and programmes introduced to boost pupils' performance. As a result, standards by the end of Year 6 have risen steadily and national test results in 2008 were the school's best ever. The school has rigorous systems to track pupils' progress. The information obtained is used well to identify those pupils who need extra help with their work. However, it is not used well enough in all lessons to ensure that work always has sufficient

challenge for the more able pupils. A shared common purpose among all staff and governors, correct priorities for improvement, and the improvement brought about since the last inspection show that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundations Stage is good. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress, particularly in personal and social development and early communication, language and literacy skills. Although by the end of Reception very few reach the expectations for their age, they have a secure foundation for future learning and development. The welfare of children is promoted well. Staff work hard to ensure that classrooms and outdoor areas are safe, happy and secure areas. Leadership and management are good. All adults work very well with parents and successfully encourage them to become involved in their children's education. Personal and social development is good. Adults take time to get to know each child. As a result, children trust them and soon settle to new routines. Children quickly learn to develop self-discipline, to take turns, share equipment and cooperate with each other. The curriculum is good. The development of speaking and listening and early literacy skills are given high priority and are taught effectively. A good range of activities is planned inside and outdoors, where children can choose activities themselves or take part in adult-led tasks. Very occasionally, when children select activities themselves, adults do not always intervene quickly enough to maximise the learning opportunities. Staff successfully incorporate pupils' own interests into the planned activities. For example, the MOT station, complete with a real car wheel, helps to fire pupils' imagination and enthusiasm and is particularly effective when an adult is on hand to model the language for pupils. There are good examples of detailed and thorough assessment and action is being taken to ensure that procedures are consistently applied across the phase.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that a good level of challenge is consistently provided for the more able pupils, to enable them to achieve higher standards in their work.
- Ensure that pupils' learning targets are individual to them and clearly inform them of the next steps to improve their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils build well on the good start made in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress throughout the school to attain average standards by the end of Year 6. Many and varied support programmes ensure that pupils who are less able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Although since the previous inspection standards across the school have risen steadily, few pupils are reaching the above average levels. This is because the work they are given in Years 1 to 6 is not always sufficiently challenging for the more able to help them reach the standards of which they are capable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding. Behaviour is exceptionally good so that pupils settle well to their work and lessons are rarely interrupted. Pupils are polite, helpful and enthusiastic about their school. They really enjoy learning, cooperate well and

willingly help and support each other. Pupils state confidently that bullying and racism are very rare. They express confidence in the school's systems to deal with any incidents should they occur. They socialise very well together and respect each other's values and differences. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community as play leaders and as members of the school council. Most pupils arrive at school regularly and on time. Since the previous inspection the school has further strengthened its extremely thorough attempts to encourage regular attendance, including extending the involvement of external agencies and reminding parents of the need for their children's regular attendance via text messages. As a result, attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. The school's significant emphasis on developing pupils' social, emotional and personal well-being prepares them well for life beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers use a good range of different methods to engage pupils in learning, for example through having them talk with a partner and using short drama activities. The skilful use of questions to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding is a good feature of many lessons, but this is not consistent in all classes. The ends of lessons are generally used well to assess what pupils have learned and to emphasise key teaching points. When practice is outstanding, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are very high and learning is rapid. Tasks capture pupils' attention, are very closely matched to their needs and ability and help them make connections in their learning. However, work is not consistently well planned to challenge the more able pupils in all lessons. As a result, they do not always reach the standards of which they are capable. Very skilled teaching assistants make a highly effective contribution in supporting the work of groups and individuals and particularly help pupils who are less able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well organised. The focus on programmes to teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is helping to lift standards throughout the school. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is well planned and pupils say they thoroughly enjoy using new technology. The school is taking steps to provide more opportunities to extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. The excellent focus on personal, social, emotional and health education is seen in happy, confident and polite pupils and their outstanding personal development. Opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities beyond lessons make a very good contribution to raising pupils' self-confidence and esteem.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care is outstanding. Arrangements to safeguard pupils fully meet current government requirements. Arrangements relating to health and safety, and welfare, are very good. There is excellent support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Extensive links with a range of organisations are used very effectively to support pupils who experience difficulties in their lives and this support often extends to their families. The Bluebell Room provides a calm, peaceful haven where exceptional, and successful, attention

is given to boosting pupils' self-worth and confidence. The excellent care, support and guidance provided there also aid others to develop self-discipline if they find difficulty in controlling their behaviour. They are able to join in all school activities as a result. The school works very well with families to promote relationships, encourage them to support their children's education and to promote the need for regular attendance. Since the previous inspection rigorous procedures to improve attendance have strengthened further. They are constantly reviewed and revised and the school continues its extremely vigorous efforts to target a small group of families who have yet to respond. Academic guidance is satisfactory. In the best examples marking provides very good advice to help pupils improve their work. However, learning targets do not precisely pinpoint what individual pupils need to do to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides extremely strong and purposeful leadership and management. Members of the senior leadership team, as well as subject leaders, are now firmly supporting the drive for school improvement through their clearly defined responsibilities. Their roles are developing well because arrangements to train and develop staff are closely aligned to school improvement planning and the needs of individuals. The senior leadership team and subject leaders are well supported by a strong and knowledgeable governing body, which helps to shape the future direction of the school. Governors are not afraid to ask searching questions and ensure that the school gives good value for money. Realistic but challenging targets are used to help raise both academic standards and levels of attendance. Community cohesion is good with significant strengths within the school and the local communities. The school has analysed its context well and is now developing further the global aspect of community cohesion. Rigorous arrangements are in place to track and assess pupils' progress accurately. Successful programmes are put in place to support those pupils who need extra help, but programmes to provide greater challenge for the more able pupils are yet to be implemented. The school has identified this as an area for improvement.

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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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

On behalf of the inspectors I would like to thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. You were all very helpful, polite and friendly and we were impressed by your excellent behaviour. We enjoyed our visit very much, especially watching the 'wake up and shake up' sessions and seeing how enthusiastic you are about these.

Alderman Bolton is a good school and some aspects of its work are outstanding.

- All staff take exceptionally good care of you and help you to stay safe, fit and healthy.
- Your teachers make your lessons interesting and you try very hard with your work and really enjoy learning.
- The teaching assistants are very good at helping those of you who find learning more difficult to understand your work and join in your lessons.
- You make good progress in your lessons.
- Your headteacher and all other staff work closely with the governors to help plan what needs to be improved.

To make your school even better we have asked your headteacher and governors to ensure that those of you who sometimes find work easier are given tasks with greater challenge so that you can achieve even more. Although groups of you have learning targets, we have asked your school to look at ways to make these personal to you and easier for you to understand to help you improve your work.

You can help, too by continuing to try your very best, working hard and trying to reach those targets and by ensuring that you always attend school regularly and on time.