

Acorns Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130873
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	329605
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Ken Buxton HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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)	38
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	10
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jacque Brown
Headteacher	Dorinda Hunt
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Close Long Compton Shipston-on-Stour CV36 5LA
Telephone number	01608 684654
Fax number	01608 684654

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Inspection number	329605

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

When Acorns Primary School was inspected in February 2007 it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Since then the school has received regular monitoring inspection visits.

An acting deputy headteacher was seconded to the school in June 2007 and, following the headteacher's absence, subsequently took on the role of acting headteacher. In July 2007, the school was seriously damaged by flooding but, following a huge concerted effort, managed to open for the start of the autumn term 2007. A new acting headteacher was appointed in September 2008.

This is a much smaller than average primary school. There are currently no pupils in Year 3. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is much lower than average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average and no pupils are learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also much lower than average and none have a statement of special educational need.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is located in the Nursery and Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. This is because the school is providing a satisfactory and improving quality of education for the pupils.

Since its last inspection, the school has managed some significant challenges well. Good leadership and management have led the way by working to create a school that is a credit to the local community. The staff have risen to the challenge by taking on additional responsibilities and delivering good quality lessons. As a result, pupils are now making satisfactory progress. This is because pupils do better in some years than others, but they are achieving good standards, and reaching levels at or above the national average by the end of Year 6.

Pupils are proud of their school and want to do well. Pupils' behaviour is good as is their personal development. Pupils work hard and apply themselves to the task in hand. The curriculum is satisfactory overall but information and communication technology (ICT) is currently under represented because of technical problems. The recent curriculum review is introducing a fresh, topic based approach to learning. The initial signs about this approach are positive as pupils say that lessons are better and more interesting. They particularly like practical lessons and opportunities to apply learning from one subject to another. For example, Years 1 and 2 pupils were using the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' as a focus for learning. In their mathematics lesson, they were involved in a number of exciting practical activities including using cubes to measure Jack's beanstalk, which worked very well.

Staff at the school take care to ensure pupils are kept safe. Levels of supervision are appropriate and all procedures, including safeguarding arrangements, are completed with due care and attention.

The school's leaders are well placed to support the school through the next stage of its development. Their improvement plans are considered and appropriate. They have started to find ways to work more closely within the local community and beyond and, as such, demonstrate satisfactory progress towards promoting community cohesion. The governing body has gained a much better understanding of its responsibilities and is playing a greater role in supporting the school's development. The improvements that have taken place since the last inspection demonstrate clearly that the school has a good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school's induction procedures work well and ensure that children settle quickly into the school's routines. This is because the school provides a warm and caring atmosphere where children's physical, social and emotional needs are met well. Good links with parents are encouraged through the shared information that is provided regularly. The accommodation for the EYFS has improved significantly with the addition of a large conservatory, which adds considerably more indoor space. Children also have good access to a well organised outdoor area. Teachers plan appropriately to meet the needs of the Nursery and Reception children. Outdoor activities are also planned as an integral part of the EYFS curriculum. As a result, children's personal development is good. Their behaviour is very good and children make good progress and are prepared well for the start of Year 1. Leadership and management of the EYFS are good. With the recent changes to staffing, the support provided by the headteacher and

other experienced colleagues has ensured that the provision continues to run smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils make good progress in all years and attain the standards of which they are capable.
- Improve pupils' access to ICT so that pupils can develop the skills needed.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children join the Reception Year with skills and knowledge broadly typical of a four-year-old, although some children's language and communication skills are slightly less well developed. They get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception and make good progress so that they are well prepared for Year 1. In the past pupils' rates of progress across Key Stage 1 have been variable and the standards attained by the end of Year 2 have fluctuated. Similarly, pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 was very uneven. The changes introduced over the last year have improved the rate at which pupils make progress so that it is satisfactory overall. Pupils make more progress in some years than others, but they are reaching higher standards. In 2008, all the Year 6 pupils achieved the standards expected and in mathematics and science most reached the higher levels. This improving picture is repeated in most other year groups with the majority of pupils on track to achieve appropriately challenging targets. Similarly, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are catered for well enabling them to make satisfactory progress and achieve the standards expected.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development is evident in the good behaviour and positive relationships seen throughout the school. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to talk about their work and the recent changes that have happened at the school. They are friendly, polite and thoughtful young people who have a satisfactory understanding of the different cultures contributing to British society. Pupils like and respect their teachers and work hard, which supports their personal development well. Their attendance levels are well above average and they are confident that any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with appropriately. Pupils have a good awareness of the importance of exercise and healthy eating. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example learning about the dangers of fire from the fire fighters who visited recently which helped them to develop useful life skills. Through participation in the school council and by taking on individual responsibilities, pupils' involvement in the work of the school is good. Pupils play a satisfactory part in local community events, for example by raising funds for charities and participating in village activities. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of education. In particular, they demonstrate a good capacity to work in teams and to reflect on how well they are doing.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This is an excellent achievement given that at the time of the last inspection in February 2007 it was judged inadequate in Years 3 to 6. Teachers now plan lessons that are matched more carefully to pupils' age and ability. They are increasingly using their knowledge of pupils' progress to plan suitable next steps in learning. The activities planned often enthuse, motivate and challenge pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding further. Teachers make good use of time to move lessons along at an appropriate pace so that pupils maintain interest throughout and do not become distracted. They respond particularly well to opportunities to engage in practical lessons that allow them to learn and apply new skills. Relationships within the classrooms are very positive and teachers are increasingly displaying good levels of subject knowledge and acting as good role models. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Teaching assistants are deployed to good effect. They work closely with teachers to support individuals and groups of pupils and make a positive contribution to lessons. Good relationships with parents and carers encourage them to take an active role in supporting their children's learning and development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced and meets the statutory requirements. There is good provision for literacy and numeracy but, because of technical problems, not in ICT. The curriculum has recently been revised to allow for greater creativity in lessons. Teachers are already making better links between subjects, which is making learning more relevant to pupils. For example, in their study of 'The Tudors', Key Stage 2 pupils made good use of their literacy skills to write letters to the historical figure of Henry VIII. Progress has also started on making the curriculum more practical with increased opportunities to learn at first hand, particularly in science through practical investigations. Pupils in Key Stage 2 also benefit from being able to learn French as a modern foreign language.

Pupils enjoy after school activities, but because there are so few they do not add significantly to the overall quality of the day-to-day curriculum. The school's recent initiative in joining Warwickshire's Children's University is intended to increase pupils' opportunities to experience a wider range of activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are appropriate. All adults having contact with pupils have completed the legal checks required. Health and safety checks are carried out regularly but plans to finish the partially completed emergency action plans, although in hand, have yet to be finalised. Staff know the pupils very well and pupils are confident to approach them if they have any concerns, ensuring that pastoral support is good. Academic support and guidance have improved. Pupils' progress is checked more regularly and the marking of pupils' work is better. It frequently tells pupils how well they are doing, although on occasions it does not give pupils enough advice on how to improve. Pupils are set individual improvement targets, which are reviewed regularly. In

some lessons staff provide explicit reminders to individual pupils about particular aspects of their work that they need to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The change in the school's leadership has been managed very well to ensure that improvement priorities have continued with little or no loss of momentum. The newly appointed acting headteacher has rapidly gained a good understanding of the issues facing the school and has worked hard to ensure that emerging problems are resolved quickly. Relationships within the school have been strengthened by her calm and confident management style. As a result, morale has improved enormously and staff have risen to the challenge of taking on new responsibilities following the reorganisation of teaching across the school. Subject leaders are playing an increasingly important role in leading and managing their subject areas. Recent staff training events illustrate how well the staff are working together to identify where improvements are needed and to formulate strategies to bring about the intended change. The governing body has risen to the challenge of working with, and challenging, the school to show its best. The governors have been supported well by the local authority to develop the skills needed to discharge their responsibilities appropriately. The chair of governors has worked tirelessly to provide the school with whatever help is needed. Because of the improvements that have occurred and the improved standards pupils have achieved, the school has shown a good capacity to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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 learners' needs?	2
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?	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?	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	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

7 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Acorns Primary School, Long Compton CV36 5LA

Congratulations, I am writing to let you know some good news. Your school no longer requires special measures as it is improving and is now providing you with a satisfactory education. This is because everyone at the school has worked very hard to make sure that the school is a real credit to the local community.

This was my fourth visit to your school so I have got to know many of you well. You told me how much your school had improved and I agree with you. Lessons are organised well and you find them more interesting which helps you make better progress. As on my previous visits, I was again very impressed with your good behaviour and good manners. I was particularly impressed with your very high levels of attendance, which is one of the best in the country, so well done.

Everyone working at the school is very keen that the school gets even better. They have lots of plans and ideas about how they will achieve their goal. I have asked them to make sure they do two particular things that will help you do better. The first is to make sure that you make good progress every year so that you can reach the highest level of which you are capable. The second is to make sure all the ICT equipment is working properly so that you can develop the skills you need.

Finally, I will finish by saying thank you for telling me so much about your school and about how proud you are of learning at Acorns Primary School.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Ken Buxton Her Majesty's Inspector